Jane Allen

Center

Edith Bancroft

"Teekawata, come!" called the Indian.

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By

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Jane Allen of the Sub-Team, Jane Allen: Right Guard, etc.

THE SAALFIELD PUBLISHING COMPANY

Akron, Ohio New York

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Jane Allen, Center

Made in the United States of America

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CHAPTER I

THE SILVER LINING

JOLLY round fleecy clouds tumbled over their playmates in the great, broad playfield of endless blue; baby cloudlets climbed to tops, only to slide down the other side, while haughty, majestic, dignified leaders paraded straight to the prairie line, taking on tones more sombre with each lap of earth left below. A shower should be marshalled, it had been promised the wheat fields, but those young sky rowdies never wanted to work, always romping and skylarking, allowing the silliest little breezes to blow them off their course.

The girl on the grass gazed up; in her gray eyes the steely glints quivered into sharp, silver

blade-like flashes, reflected from the arrow of some little god just peeking from behind the cloud mountain. He warned her of the shower, he knew the parade would soon be formed into battle line, yet the girl saw only the sunshine still braving the cloud's attack.

"Just like one's fortune," she mused, "clouds and sunshine, pleasant here and a storm somewhere else. I wonder why we take things so seriously? I believe the greatest philosophy of life is moderation: and I am going to be very moderate with my little worries. The sunshine is only behind the cloud, and the reaction is always crowding the perplexities. I am not going to worry about going away this year."

The girl was retrospective. Vacation was almost over, and Jane Allen would soon leave the hills of El Capitan, her ranch home, to take up her Junior year at Wellington college. Fortified with the resolution against loneliness Jane would try to cover the thought of leaving her dear dad, and her Aunt Mary, with the anticipation of so much joy at the homecoming when the school term would end. A drop of rain fell into her eye with the precision of an eye dropper. She blinked, then jumped to her feet.

"Jan, Janie also Jeanie," she roused herself.

"Do you want some woozy gnome to turn you into an old maid? Why the ruminating? In the words of Judy Stearns, why the Willies? Don't you want to go back to Wellington?" she asked herself.

A light sprinkle answered her. That shower would come in spite of the sun still showing blades of defiance. A rumble of thunder chased the flash from her eyes and the playful sky god ducked behind the black mountain. Jane stretched her arms unconsciously into gym rhythm, did a one, two, three and a couple of doubles, then straightened her lithe form, squared her shoulders, and made a quarter of a mile dash to the house. She tumbled into the cushions at Aunt Mary's feet just as the drops assumed the magnitude of splatter and splash.

"Auntie Mary," she panted, "did you notice it is raining?"

"Notice it? I behold it, Janie dear. I am glad you got back in time. These late summer showers often turn into good sizable storms. Where have you been?"

"Under my particular tree. I was telling my fortune in the sky when I espied a whole flock of clouds, that wanted to play with an earth maiden. They flirted outrageously, but I knew

you would never consent to my taking up with sky-gods without being properly introduced. So I shook my head, and wig-wagged that they should send their cards to the astronomy class. Auntie, hast any mail?"

"Yes, dear. And one from Wellington."

"Oh, goody-good! It will tell us who won the scholarship. But look at that rain. I wonder if Firefly got to his shed? I must see."

"Janie, don't run in that downpour, Janie!" But the girl was off down the bridle path, waving her arms backward to signify how splendid the sheets of rain felt, tossing up her bronze head, determined to accept the full charge of the unequaled beauty bath in her joyous face. Oh! it was wonderful to be alive and at El Capitan!

"The dear," murmured her aunt, "and some folks think her willful. I have always noticed that her self will ran in the right direction. She didn't care to leave home for school, of course, but now she loves college life. Well, I do wonder if there is anything more beautiful in life than a glorious young girl."

Was Aunt Mary a little regretful? She had been a young girl once. She had been glorious too. Jane had inherited her own swirl of bronze

hair from this self-same Aunt Mary, while the mother, a woman of rare beauty had given the daughter those metallic gray eyes. Their glints could be as soft as silver, or as flashy as steel, so, beautiful eyes, that were velvet in meekness were really metallic in their moody changes. Presently a gale of laughter announced Jane's return.

"Auntie," called the girl who was thus being eulogized, "I am bringing you a guest. Here is Uncle Tod, got caught in the storm, purposes to give you a jolly chat. Come on, Uncle. Aunt Mary wants to hear all about the auction over Lincoln way. They even sold the big tree, Aunt Mary."

On the arm of the young girl there came trudging along the tanbark path Uncle Tod; old, gray, tottering, his cane so much a part of himself as to seem a third member, his uncertain smile ever making its way to Jane's happy face, while she urged and assisted him to the porch. Plainly he loved Jane, and he enjoyed the prospect of a chat with Aunt Mary, for Uncle Tod was a ranch character, serving, by contrast, to picture more clearly the types so varied and so completely different from that which he presented. Uncle Tod was a conservative in a group of rebels.

He kept with him the mannerisms of old New York State and was a Yankee of the strongest and deepest dye. Even the twang of voice, and tworl of words, had not been rounded out into the drawl of the hills around El Capitan.

"Good afternoon, or is it still mornin'?" wheezed the old man. "Glad I met Janie or that there shower might have blown me clean into the hereafter. Sich a blow," and he adjusted the confidential cane. "Jest like the one that came one afternoon last summer, when that there city fellar tried to sell me the trick umbrel." He clambered the low steps unsteadily. "And I mind, Janie girl, you happened along that day too. Seems like as if you know just when to happen," chuckling, he put his arm more firmly into that of the girl who urged him along.

"Now, Uncle Tod, you know very well you were perfectly all right when I found you just now. I do believe you were going to sit plumb down and defy the storm. Just to see what it would do at its worst. But you are a little wet," feeling the green coat that covered the bent shoulders. "I wonder, Aunt Mary, if we can't fit Uncle Tod out in some of daddy's regimentals."

"No need, no need," he objected. "This

here co't don't leak a mite. Finest yarn—no more of this kind. I fetched it clear from Syracuse," he announced almost reverently.

"But you had better come inside," warned Aunt Mary, "the rain gets in here when the wind turns."

"Just as you say, Miss Allen. Fact is, I never say no to a sit in the parlor. I say to the boys, boys I say; if you want a real good comfortable chin, in a chair that's big enough for you, make it over at Henry Allen's place."

Graciously asknowledging the compliment, Aunt Mary and Jane led the old man into the living room he was wont to call the parlor.

"You are always welcome, Uncle Tod," said the lady.

"How about the boys, Auntie?" teased Jane. "Especially the one who plays the uke. I think he is wonderful. You should see him performing in the corral the other night. My, but he did swing that lasso!"

"You mean the fellar with the long, lanky build? He looks like he's been stretched out when he was wet!" put in Uncle Tod. "Yes, I heard him with that there fiddle box. 'Tain't more'n a mite of a box, with a couple of strings, but it kin keep a fellar awake, I tell you. There's

a tree near my hut with a regular rickin' chair, made right in it, and them there boys like that place for their evenin's. Well, Uncle Tod goes to bed earlier than the young fellars and—well, the chap with the fiddle sure does love to tune up," and the usual chuckle ended his quaint statement.

"But I really want to know about the auction, Uncle Tod," interrupted Miss Allen. "I am so sorry Welche's folks had to give the old place up at last. Did they sell everything?"

"Couple times over. Never see such shouting and jumpin'. Why the Deeny girls, them old maids as never twisted their stiff necks to bow to man or beast in these parts, them was the wurst. They just seemed to want to buy everythin' and carry it away in their old barouche." The old man pounded his cane on the buffalo rug in sheer contempt. "Like as if they was goin' to set up a first class boardin' house hotel."

"Oh, you know, Uncle," enlightened Aunt Mary. "They are related to the Welches."

"Eggzactly. I recall. More reason why they should act decent like. There was Mother Welch, out back in the barn, her apron most pokin' her eyes out at every yell from old Sheriff Nailor."

"Now, I am just going to leave you two and the auction," spoke up Jane, "while I devour the delectable news in my letter. Did you ever have a letter too good to read, Uncle Tod?"

"Yes, girl, I know that feelin'. Like you hate to have it over because you want to have it on. Well, go to it, Janie, and don't swallow too much of that yellar paper. Looks poison like to me."

Jane crushed the yellow envelope to her breast, in sheer delight. Then she snapped up a knitting needle to open the cherished missive.

"You know, Auntie," she whispered, "this will tell us who won dadykin's scholarship." Then raising her voice to Uncle Todd's inquiring eyes, "Daddy gave a scholarship to my college, Unk," she told him. "Do you suppose some very nice, prim, prudy, who took the home correspondence course between making sister Julia pinafores and Jacob's jumpers, has won it? Of course, I respect home cooking girls, and particularly admire the devotees of domestic science, but Grade B from the Branchville would be all out of luck in the Wellington routine. Bye-bye now, and be good. Uncle Todd, don't make Aunt Mary envious with your report of auction bargains. She is always and ever objecting to catalogue prices."

With a gay wave of the letter, in which delight was momentarily suppressed, Jane flitted from the room to the porch, where now the last drops of the afternoon shower were reluctantly counting their totals. She dropped into the big wicker chair near the wisteria arch, and curled up like a kitten, in the way girls have of "fairly eating" a letter.

While she is thus perusing this perfectly private communication let us present Jane Allen formally to our readers.

In the first volume, "Jane Allen of the Sub-Team," we met her as a girl Solitaire. She had been reared on a ranch, without girl companions, and had never realized that tolerance which is necessary in the big world of girls and girls. But once at the Eastern college we like her best in her brave battles against the limits of conventions she finds there, and we cannot but admire the spirit with which she holds out, just long enough, and gives in just in time, to save situations. Perhaps the true deep affection, so soon shown for Jane by her classmates of the freshmen, is the best testimonial to her glory as Jane Allen Sub. Jane had for a time ignored the tame basketball sport, delighting in her stolen rides on Firefly (for her indulgent father had sent the saddle

horse to school too with Jane as he expressed it), but finally acknowledging there was something worth while in the game Jane fought for a place on the team, and she won it triumphantly. The opposition tried many turns both fair and foul to defeat her, but Jane won out; with an interesting flourish.

Not less attractive was she as Jane Allen, Right Guard, in the second volume of the series. Girls can be very small sometimes, even behind the sheltering walls of important colleges, and in this story we were introduced to a set of "peculiars" commonly called "snobs," who spent a lot of perfectly good time trying to spoil Jane's ever-growing popularity at Wellington. Just how flatly they failed makes a rather thrilling tale. Haven't you read it? You will love the way Jane rescues Norma, the girl working her way through college, putting down scheme after scheme, concocted just to embarrass the poorer girl. Jane found a legitimate outlet for her talent as a joy maker, and a gloom crusher. Even taking it moderately, one is enthralled with her genius in making and keeping the best of friends, and Judith Stearns her "best," runs a close second with Jane in the popularity contest of the second volume.

CHAPTER II

TELLTALE TIDINGS

THE letter which Jane had so counted on, had just now shed its delightful news, and at last she knew who had won the scholarship. Winding herself tighter still in the big wicker chair, so that she seemed a veritable circle of pink organdie, she snuggled the yellow pages closer in her prettily browned hands, read a few lines over for the 'nth time and finally, with a spring and a sprint, made her way back to the living room.

Uncle Todd was evidently well pleased with his story of the Welch auction, for the palpitating cane was throbbing up and down in his sinewy hand, and Aunt Mary had completely laid aside her knitting, and sat with hands folded at attention.

"I would call it a shame," she commented as Jane entered.

"And you'd give it the right name," replied Uncle Todd.

At the threshold Jane hesitated. Even to her youthful eyes there was something restful in the picture.

"Good old pals," she said under her breath. "Aunt Mary knows how to entertain reclining years." Then picking up Bonnie, her ebony kitten, she coughed respectfully.

"Good news?" asked Aunt Mary.

"The best ever. Where is dad? I hate to give it to him second handed."

"Your father will not be back till dinner time, dear. He is over Lincoln way."

"Then we will have to enjoy it in trio. You know what it is about, Uncle Todd?"

"But, Janie girl, I've got to be a-goin'. Some chores and some cookin' to do, and if I don't get at it in good time I'm apt to slip it by. Good afternoon, ladies," he finished quite grandly. "Can't tell when I had sech a fine time."

"But you can't go now, Uncle Todd," objected Jane. "I am going to drive you over."

"No sich thing. If I don't keep a-walkin' my jints will gum up: I am goin' to walk."

"Oh, if you must," said Jane with the foolish social intonation. "So awfully sorry."

"Don't you jibe me, girlie," and he pinched her elbow. "You know as well as I do what it is worth to walk a mile a day."

"All right, Uncle Todd, but some day I am going to tell you all my good news. There comes Pedro. If you get tired just hail him, and he'll give you a lift."

Then, left alone with her aunt, Jane proceeded with the news from Wellington.

"Just see and listen," she commanded. "What a prospect of oodles of fun and frolic. Dad's scholarship has been won by a Polish artist. Think of it! A girl who plays the violin divinely, and who is—well, let's read it again."

She ran her finger over the introduction of the letter and traced out the lines which told of the Polish girl and the scholarship.

"Mrs. Weatherbee says," she announced, "that the girl is wonderfully interesting, and she is sure we shall be delighted. We are. Then she says the little artist comes from a girls' seminary, where she had been left uncalled for and that there is some mysterious story connected with her presence in America, but of course, (now listen in Auntie) of course, Mrs. Weatherbee knows I will not be carried off by any such sensational reports, but I will take the little Polish

girl on her merits. Of course I shall, I shall even take her on trial, but you can picture the other girls, and the Polish artist? Auntie, that Marion Seaton will get in touch with the Bolshevik or something, to dig up trouble for my little friend, see if she doesn't. She will go into the archives of the fall of Poland, and the battle of Warsaw, to find out that my little artist's grandfather once dropped his musket in front of the king's palace. Oh my, Auntie mine," and she loosed some of her pent-up energy in a great "grizzly hug." "Why can't you and dad come along to school with me to see the fun?" For a moment her gray eyes took on the lingering look her friends called "the dove stare," then recovering her mirthful mood she pranced around, played first with Bonnie, then with Fliver the new puppy, all the while gathering and spending the joy of young girlhood.

"Don't bother too much about my clothes, Auntie dear," she warned with a new thought. "I think I shall ask dad if I may go to the city early, and help fit up my little artist. Then I may find a lot of things I shall like, all ready to wear."

"I had been thinking of proposing that, Janie dear," confessed the aunt, to whom the clothes

problem had been an increasing worry with the addition of Jane's years. "I have read all the catalogues and sent for more, but I don't find exactly what I think you would fancy."

"No, and you won't, for I fancy a blouse and a skirt, just a little one, and perhaps a veil for evening wear." She held Fliver out at arm's length to enjoy the joke. "Of course, I would wear a so-called gown with the veil, but I love the veil, it is so shimmery." A scarf snatched from the end of the mahogany table served to illustrate the "shimmer" as Jane floated it triumphantly over her and Fliver's heads. The inevitable interpretative dance followed, and Fliver looked very frightened, evidently envying Bonnie her safety aisle on the rug.

"I am going to get your trunk out to-morrow," announced Aunt Mary, as an interlude. "I want to put some cedar chips in it, and Squaw Watah brought over a wonderful bunch of fragrant herbs, spice bush, savory and rosemary. I wonder where she raised them? She must have obtained some government seeds."

"Watah is a real farmerette," agreed Jane, coming to a standstill against the oaken post. "I would recommend her for a position in the Department of Agriculture. Ta, ta, Auntie, I'm

off to get dad. I think he will be over the Copper Turn Hill about now, and I'll ride Firefly to be back with him. I am just dying to tell him the news."

"Janie, do be careful going down that steep hill. The boys who came collecting tin cans the other day told me the rocks fall in a torrent there now."

"Oh, I know. I'll be 'keer-ful.'" The voice came from the second stair landing. Jane Allen was on her way.

She reached her own horse and it took but a few gallops to bring her up to Mr. Allen.

"Do you suppose she will have light wavy hair, and very big blue eyes, Daddy? The aristocratic Poles are always light," was among the first questions.

"But I wouldn't classify them by eyes and hair exactly," replied the man on Victor, the big gray horse. "I've known a really fine Pole who was quite red headed."

"Now Daddy, don't tease. You know a girl must be—well, a little bit pretty at least, to be popular, and I am bound to have my artist wonderfully popular—after we win the battle, of course."

"I can well imagine the battle," and Henry

Allen laughed so heartily Victor darted forward with a prance. "If your erstwhile friends, who made up the opposition last year, line up against your protege as vigorously as they attacked your other little friend, I am afraid you will take more time to train your guns on endurance, than on your favorite basketball, daughter."

"Indeed, Judy Stearns and I, and maybe Dorothy Martin, are very well able to hold our own against the Marian Seaton crowd," answered Jane, bringing Firefly's head up higher in punctuation. "I rather think they will not be quite so vigorous with their campaign of hate this year. I should think even envious girls would learn their lesson some time."

"I have often thought the same of the boys I have to deal with out here, but it is curious how envy sticks."

Pencils of sunset were now etching their path through the trees, and the well tramped road bore slight evidence of the afternoon's shower. "Daughter, I hate to have you go," continued Mr. Allen, "but your spirit makes me proud. Uncle Todd was telling the men out Lincoln way the other day, that Henry Allen's girl was almost as good as a boy."

"Oh, he is a character!" Jane exclaimed. "I had him over during the shower, and he and Aunt Mary had a great time gossiping. Dad, may I go to New York a little early? That is, quite early," she qualified cautiously.

"Of course, daughter. But why the haste?"

"Well, you see, about this new girl—she will have to be fitted out. Mrs. Weatherbee hinted she would get some friends interested in her who might help, but it seems to me I could make my allowance do for both of us."

"You just get what you want, little girl. Don't worry about the bill. Old dad has still some credit, you know."

Even Firefly tried to edge closer to respond gratefully. Jane tipped her little whip under her father's chin, thereby endangering the tilt of his cap. "You are always so generous, Dad. Couldn't I gather tin cans to sieve the copper through, or do something to make up?" she asked playfully. "Really, if I am almost as good as a boy, don't you think I might sometime act the part?"

"You are a heap better, little girl, and I have no wish to see you act otherwise than just as my Janie," replied the smiling father. "But those boys you have just noticed gathering the tins are

wasting their time. No more copper comes this way in the mine water. All their rusty tins will be wasted, for Montana copper is being too well worked these days," declared Mr. Allen, referring to the tin-can trick of collecting copper through the cyanide method.

"Oh, how disappointed they will be! Should we tell them?" suggested Jane, observing at that moment the group of boys trudging along with their cart of old tins.

"Well, they may get some farther on, but not around here," amended Mr. Allen. "By the way, Janie, when do you want to start with this new plan of shopping and college trip?"

Jane looked under her long lashes to discover, if possible, how her father felt about her leaving earlier than they had planned. But he was flicking Victor with the willow whip, and she obtained no clue to his feelings from his expression.

Jane hated to be so abrupt—of course he would be lonely.

"Oh, I thought I might leave about ten days earlier," she ventured. "That will give me time to locate the Polish girl, get acquainted, and help with her outfit. Besides, Aunt Mary suggested that I buy some of my things ready-to-wear, as

it is so difficult here to shop by mail from St. Paul."

"That would be about when?" persisted the father.

"About next Wednesday."

"Very well, girlie. Just so long as I know how many signed checks to get ready, and how many men to assign to the baggage."

Jane looked relieved. Her father plainly had come to the same conclusion she had managed to confine her reasoning to, namely: since she couldn't bring the Eastern college to El Capitan, she would have to go to the college, and that protesting against the details of separation from her beloved ranch home, simply threw a shadow over the prospect of a joyful year at school.

"We are getting educated, Janie," Mr. Allen said, as they pulled up to the waiting groom. "Old dad takes the school term as a matter of course now. Not that I don't miss my little girl as much as ever, but because I have taken the home course in economics—the grade that gives us all the discipline and the self control," he laughed at this attempt to qualify his change of mental attitude. He was a wonderful father, a perfectly adorable pal, and withal a business man whose name spelled power and prosperity.

"Dad, all the same I'm a weakling," admitted Jan. "Because I just hate to leave you—and——"

"There's a special messenger boy all the way from Copper Hill Turn," interrupted the father. "Now what do you suppose he is bringing us in the way of good news?"

The Mexican boy slipped off his burro and with an indescribable salute (something between a military motion and an acrobatic finish to some remarkable star act) he handed the message to Mr. Allen.

"Yours, daughter. Whoever is writing you from over the hills and what can be so very important as to fetch Santos?" asked Mr. Allen.

"All our wonders seem to come by post," commented Jane. She was scanning the few words on the telegram sent in from the nearest railway station. Suddenly she gave a jump, and seemed too overcome with emotion to express herself in words.

"Daddy!" she exclaimed, finally. "Judy is on her way back from the coast and is looking for us. She is at the Hill Turn. Oh, can you imagine Judy Stearns getting way out here, and being with me on the trip to college!"

"Rare luck indeed, daughter. At the station

did you say? Well, let us get to her at once. Can't take a chance on her getting into that famous stage coach of Curly Bill's. You run in and tell Aunt Mary the glad news, and I'll get the tandem hitched. Don't you think it will be nice to show her our best style?"

"Oh, lovely, Daddy. But I am so excited. I never could have dreamed of such luck. To have dear old Judy visit me here until I go back, and then to have her travel with me! Yes, get the tandem. Pedro!" she called to the man just losing himself in the trees towards the big stable. "Come over here! Daddy, don't you slick up a single bit. I want Judy to see you as a ranch chief. And I think I'll get into my Bronco Billie outfit just to show off. No, that wouldn't go with tandem, would it? Yes, it would too," she changed her mind and decided again, too excited to act rationally.

"Now, I'll dress and be ready in five minutes," announced the girl. "Oh, I forgot I haven't told you the message," she had it crumbled in her brown hand. " 'Am at the Hill Turn Station. Tell me how to reach you.' There, we will show her how we reach her," and she skipped off leaving her father to arrange about the tandem and the high red-wheel cart.

CHAPTER III

OVER THE HILLS AND FAR AWAY

WITH that efficiency so marked in large establishments (for El Capitan was large and really an establishment) the new arrangements of driving over the hills for Judith Stearns, Jane's college room-mate, and the preparations Aunt Mary was wont to add to the already splendidly planned guest entertainment, were all perfected and carried out without so much as exciting Pedro to complain of his delayed supper, and its consequent effect on "the game" that was to follow.

"I am so glad," Aunt Mary murmured. "Now I shall have a chance to see Jane's most intimate companion, and it will afford me such an opportunity of studying the dear girls, and thus being better able to understand them. I have always wished that Jane might have had

some playmate of her own kind, and she is so very fond of Judith, I shall be delighted to know her also."

It seemed to the busy little woman that Jane and her father were scarcely gone when a shrill blast of the trumpet announced their return.

With a flourish the coaching party drew up to the porch. The delight of the girls was so evident Mr. Allen and his sister hurried through the formalities of welcome to leave the chums alone together.

"Now, we will just leave you all to yourselves," he concluded, when Aunt Mary had directed the man to carry in the bags, and ordered the maid to announce dinner in twenty minutes, that length of time being demanded by Jane as necessary for Judith's freshening up. Arms twined around shoulders, eyes reflecting each other's very thoughts, chatting and laughing over happenings absolutely foreign to those outside the charmed circle of college interests, the chums entered upon their period of pre-school and post-vacation days.

"And to think I might have missed all this if I had not thought of you and the copper mines," Judith was saying as Jane fastened the snaps on her light silk "freshen up" gown. "You

know, Janie, I am just as forgetful as ever, only I have a new system: I don't forget the things I love best."

"I will agree you may indulge that habit to the limit, Judy, if you stick to your professed plan. Then I know I shall never get in the jumble of mixups with things you don't love," Jane affectionately assured her.

"I don't wonder you hated to leave home for school, Jane," said the visitor, surveying the rustic beauty of the rambling house, built unlike a California bungalow, and unlike an Eastern mansion, but exactly like what should be the home of Jane Allen. "This is absolutely charming."

"What?" asked Jane teasing. "Our Jap boy cook, or our Mexican boy valet? We have a queer household. Quite cosmopolitan, to put it mildly. Sometimes, when they get excited, I fancy the Tower of Babel has fallen anew. Come on, that means dinner," as the big Indian gong pealed softly its muffled announcement.

The tall girl with the blue eyes and glossy brown hair, Judith Stearns, possessed a certain dignity Jane had not yet acquired. Perhaps that was the result of her Eastern home life and its

culturing influence. As Henry Allen critically, if surreptitiously, noted Jane was different, but he liked Jane first rate. She might be a little bit of a tom-boy around the ranch, but she was a great pal to build up a home with. The two girls took their places side by side at the long polished table, Aunt Mary gracing the head and Mr. Allen sitting at the opposite end, from where he not only dispensed the plentiful fare, but irradiated the charm of the gracious and well seasoned host that he was.

"Janie, your favorite troubador has a little gift for you," he interposed. "I could not guess what all his apologies and *con grazias* presaged the other day, but finally he admitted he had made for the senorita a small music box. It is from the best grade cigar case, and has the finest antelope string. He drew his fingers across it to assure me, and it really made very sweet music."

"Oh, a home made ukelele! How splendid!" exclaimed Jane. "I shall take it to Wellington, and maybe my little Polish artist can sing to its accompaniment! I am just wild about those little ukes. Daddy, when will Fedario deliver it?"

"It was not quite finished," replied Mr. Allen. "I fancy he is going to decorate it with per-

forations to sieve the tones very, very fine. He went into the ranch store with me yesterday, and bought a little scroll saw. Fedario is very musical. The boys complain he sings to the horses, and that the animals expect it from the less accomplished, who are more apt to growl than warble. At any rate, I notice he gets along with the wildest broncos. But his talent for music is marked. He goes off in the trees, and is better satisfied with his guitar than another might be with a whole flock of companions and their unfailing energy at cards."

"Oh, yes," Jane remembered, "he must be the boy Uncle Todd said kept him awake nights, singing in the chair tree at his hut. But Judy, can you imagine my uke sounding weird strains, under windows and behind closet doors? We will surely be able now to capture Calliope for stunt nights, with my Mexican ukelele."

"Yes. And I just know you will play wonderful ditties on it. I heard them in Frisco—the girls from Hawaii gave a concert at a carnival, and they brought out some splendid music from the little fiddles. Personally, I feel I should have to use a can opener, but you know how popular the uke is now, Janie. I can just see you carrying it around like Fido, and sleep-

ing with it at the foot of your bed, on your baby-blue silk quilt."

This vision brought a ripple of mirth from the diners. That the uke should become as popular as the lap dog was admitted by all who had observed the average young girl's growing love for the miniature music box.

"I have to tell you so much more of my new plans, Judy," digressed Jane, as Aunt Mary signalled to the Jap dinner was finished. "I have only just begun on my new prospectus. I haven't even named my little artist."

"I am sure we will have the best year ever," replied the guest. "We have had Adrienne, the French girl, and a couple of other high-class Europeans last year, but we have never before entertained a Polish girl. I know perfectly well how the Marian Seaton crowd will regard her. With horns, you can be sure."

"Oh, I have counted on that," Jane admitted. "All the more room for fun. If our new friend is not too sensitive," and the gray eyes expressed just the least glint of suppressed anxiety.

"Indeed, we are equal to the opposition now, no matter what attack they take. It is a wonder to me they don't promptly capitulate."

"Too much steam in the wrong valve," in-

formed Jane. "It has to be drawn off in the trouble pipe."

"Or might result in an explosion," helped out Mr. Allen. "Janie, I suppose you often get your mining efficiency mixed with your psychology." He turned to Judith hospitably. "Miss Stearns, I cannot tell you how pleased we are that you have been able to make this visit. Janie and I were just about at the end of our rope on the trail of a good time, when we got your wire. Now we have an incentive, for we both love to show off, don't we, Janie?"

"I'll match you, Dad," she challenged. "I believe I can show off more high spots around El Capitan than you can. I even know how to catch copper in tin cans."

At this all laughed. Janie had made a reputation early in her ranch life following the boys who staked claims and attempted to work the mines with purloined tin cans.

"I thought perhaps we would arrange a little party to go into Union Centre for to-morrow if you care to, girls," Aunt Mary injected. "The Indians are in, and we may find some trinkets suitable for souvenirs."

"Splendiforous, Auntie. I want a couple of baskets so much, and some bead bags to take

back. I think I'll give the faculty all pretty bead bags, as vacation gifts."

"Peace offerings," suggested Judith. "I think that a fine idea. Wonder if I couldn't find a bag with an apology beaded on it? I owe one to my Latin teacher."

"Well, the evening is slipping, or climbing, whichever you choose, young ladies, and I am going to run around the corral to do a little inspecting to-night. Would you care to go?" asked Mr. Allen.

"Oh, I should love to!" exclaimed Judith with enthusiasm. "I have always longed to see a ranch outside the movies. Jane, I had no idea you owned all Montana."

"We really do not quite own the entire state," replied Jane, echoing the facetious tone of her chum. "But dad has quite a corner of it. Yes, we will go with you, Dadykins, and maybe Judy will have an opportunity of judging Fedario's talent. He is sure to be in the chair-tree with his guitar. Dad, why don't you organize a glee club?"

"No need to organize, daughter, the boys have one in splendid working order. Perhaps we will be able to have a concert from them before you leave."

"Oh, how jolly! Jane, how do you think we will ever be able to tear ourselves away from all this? Couldn't we start a home-study course, or something outside?" pouted Judith.

Donning their brilliant sweaters, the girls were soon ready, and taking their places in the buck-board set out to assist in the inspection. Within the corrals the shouting of the cowboys, and the antics of broncos and ponies, presented a scene quite like the Wild West of the screen world. Jane and Judith were in their glory. Jane with the joy of exhibiting the "High Spots of Ranch Life," she had promised, and Judith with the exhilarating delight of observing such wonders for the first time.

"And to think I might have missed it all," she reflected in Jane's ear, when a dash of the ponies brought them up to the end of the fenced-in patches of dust, noise and horses. "I had not planned to stop off until—Can you guess what made me think you lived somewhere near the Montana trail?"

"Oh, of course. Butte, pronounced 'beaut'?" ventured Jane, and even Henry Allen considered the guess worthy of a prize. And he said so.

This particular evening, the prelude of a series that followed, there was carried out a program

of such enjoyment, that one would easily agree with Judith, it would be hard indeed for the girls to tear themselves away from the ranch life to take up the circumspect duties of college. The excitement of actually bargaining with the Indians and obtaining the souvenir beaded bags (although none with an abject apology worked in its intricacies was to be found for Judith), then the dear moccasins, about which Mr. Allen coaxed the squaws to tell such quaint fables, not to speak of the mysteriously woven baskets, made big enough and small enough for any imaginable dressing or sewing use, when all garnered and gathered made up a precious burden for the depot cart in which the El Capitan party rode home that wonderful summer afternoon.

"Couldn't we stop at Squaw Squatty's, Daddy? I would love to have the old Indian tell Judy's fortune," Jane suggested.

"Oh, yes, do," pleaded Judy. "I want so much to know about a big secret I have planned for the first half," she volunteered. "Jane, I'll tell you about it, maybe. But I should like to know how it will all pan out, and I'm sure a squaw would be able to foretell," she ventured, with a sly grimace at Aunt Mary.

CHAPTER IV

WOO NAH AND THE FORTUNES

"CAN we make it, Daddy?" asked Jane. "Doesn't that look like a little cyclone cloud?" indicating the cloud with a "tail" that seemed to be gathering color and speed as the buckboard traveled on.

"Old Squatty's cabin would be as good a place as any in a blow," her father replied. "If we get one, we could put the horses in shelter around there, and maybe the lightning might give the old lady a real glimpse into the beyond. Shall we try it, sister?" to Miss Allen who was, as a rule, rather timid of the storms that sprung up so suddenly on the plains.

"I am perfectly willing," acquiesced the lady. "As you say, brother, the cabin would be a comparatively safe place to seek shelter in."

With that velocity peculiar to storms of the

prairie the anticipated baby cyclone gathered force, and with one great gust and almost without warning broke over their heads.

Jane opened the curtains of the cart to allow the gale a way out, without incurring the possibility of upsetting them. Judith was simply fascinated with the sweep everything was taking, but Aunt Mary gathered herself as far as possible into her bonnet and wrap, scarcely venturing to speak while Mr. Allen held his horses in with a firm rein.

"Just a few paces," he shouted reassuringly. "Hold tight!"

"All right," called back Jane, and so deafening was the swirl that only a clear, loud voice such as she exercised could have made its way to the driver just in front.

Two big shaggy dogs intercepted the dash of the buckboard into the squaw's lane. The old woman was still outside, hunched up in the queerest sort of a hammock, made of a halfed barrel, strung up to two young oak trees. With something like a howl she called the dogs off, and waved a stick to the travelers to come in, seemingly sensing the possibility of profit in their visit. Mr. Allen discovered where to find shelter for his team, and as the storm was tearing

and scattering limbs of trees, and everything it could wrench from stability, he did not stop until he had entered the queer stable with the cart and its occupants.

"Now we are in for it," he admitted, assisting Aunt Mary to alight. "I'm glad we are here and not on Steeple Hill."

"Thrills!" exclaimed Judith. "More thrills. I have seen nothing but wonders since I came to Montana. I really think, Janie, I have had more real experiences while here than in all my coast touring."

"Lovely of you to say so, Judy. But just wait till you see old Mrs. Teekawata. She is the wife of the one great medicine man, or rather his widow. Don't mention fortune telling, that would offend her. She is a 'scientist.' She will mix up stuffs, and get clues from the smoke! That is if she is in a communicative mood."

"Or in need of white bread," amended Mr. Allen, who had overheard the girls. "Teekawata is a business woman with talents wasted. She should have been a copper queen."

The storm was scattering almost as quickly as it had gathered. The old squaw had tumbled out of her half barrel, and leaning on her stick, awaited the party's approach from the shack.

Aunt Mary edged close to her brother. She had no love for these old Indians, and rather feared for her belongings when in their company.

"Greeting!" called Mr. Allen to the old woman. "Thunder Cloud sent you his good word. Did you see how he followed us in here?"

"Si si," answered the woman, who was of the Mexican type. "Approach!" and she indicated an old bench under the mendicant vines that straggled around the hut. So heavy had they grown the rain of the shower had not penetrated their depths, and like a canopy, they arched over the poles, propped at ends for their support. She stared at the girls without any pretext of apology. Judith with her dark hair seemed particularly attractive to the squaw's flagrant scrutiny. Aunt Mary remained outside.

"The young ladies wonder," ventured Mr. Allen, "if you have heard from Teekawata lately, Woo Nah. Perhaps he has sent a message for their good health?"

"Health!" she repeated in good English. "The medicine man forgets not the health of good white brothers. The sunset gives light to their cheeks, and the stars sleep in their eyes," she rhapsodied.

Jane nudged Judith to make note of the compliment.

"When Woo Nah was at the government school," continued the Indian, "she has seen many young girl. They come to give English. Some with hair and eyes like the morning, others with the midnight hair and coals from the fire eyes. But they all like Woo Nah," she insisted.

"Of course," chimed in Jane. "We like her also. Will you tell us what you know from your great husband, the Medicine Man of Broken Hill?"

"Teekawata, would not that I should foretell. But I give a dream—a dream of happiness," and she arose from the patched chair to lead the party within the cabin.

"I shall wait here," concluded Aunt Mary, who had no curiosity about the fortune telling or the interior of the ramshackle hut. In fact she was holding unnecessarily tight to her small hand-bag.

"Woozy," whispered Judith, whose eyes were sparkling like the coals or the quartz gems Woo Nah had described.

Within the cabin an assortment of snake skins and some very large ears of dried corn formed a queer decoration on the log walls. A few skins, perhaps those of the prairie rat, were also in evidence, while the glossy red corn with its ar-

tistic husk hung gracefully over a strange picture, that Jane told Judith was a portrait of the famous medicine man Teekawata. Chairs were relics of civilization which must have touched the spot at some time in a period of miners transition. The table was nailed to the wall and on it the litter of stuff spoiled an otherwise rustic effect. An American stove in the corner was evidently of the same vintage as the chairs, and there were other bits of furniture and dishes—perhaps accepted in payment for the services of the medicine man, who for years had given some sort of service to the settlers and their families.

"Not sisters?" asked and answered the old woman, to Judith and Jane.

"No, but very good friends," Mr. Allen replied with a ring in his voice that Jane and her chum fully appreciated.

The old woman now took her place on a queer high stool. On a three-legged table just beneath this stool was a big Mexican earthen bowl. Carefully she took a cover off the rather pretty jar, and then opened what looked like a snuff box. This she squinted into with a show of importance and concern.

"For the ladies' good health I will ask Teekawata to make promise," she began. Then she

lifted the snuff box above her head and muttered some unintelligible wail.

Judith had grasped Jane's hand. The scene was getting weird and a return of the storm, a sort of backfire, made the whole thing seem uncanny.

"Experience," whispered Jane. "Gives us material for school work."

"Yes, but it is creepy," answered back Judith. "I wish the storm would blow over."

The old woman continued to mumble and make cabalistic passes with the snuff box. Finally she took a match and dropped some powder from the box into the bowl, struck the match on the side of her stool and put the flame to the powder. Soon a slim string of smoke climbed out from the edge of the jar.

Mr. Allen's face wore so broad a smile that, if the girls had thought of attaching any significance to the performance, this would have dissipated it.

"Teekawata, come!" called the Indian.

"Midnight hair and starlight eyes," began the squaw, "Teekawata sends greeting and health. In gold you will make the fortune of much. Much yet will you find in the great heart of friends. From the Bear come strong." At this moment

she brought her arms out in a gesture indicating strength, but Judith dodged. She liked the soothsaying as an entertainment, but objected to personal demonstrations. The old woman scowled. Jane was bowing her head in abject attention to make amends for her friend's distraction.

"The Bear star will give our girl power," suggested Mr. Allen to keep the squaw on the right track through the clouds.

"Hush!" exclaimed the woman. "Teekawata knows no white spirit."

"Beg pardon," Mr. Allen could not help whispering for it was too funny to interrupt a ghost like that.

The squaw wasted another pinch of her spirit power from the snuff box. She also shook her head apprehensively, to show that Teekawata would not stand for nonsense. It required a few moments for the "spirits" to get going again.

"Brave and strong and happy," she finally conceded further to Judith's future, and both girls secretly wondered if that would apply to Judith's famous faculty of absent mindedness. An exchange glance between them was thus perfectly understood.

"A very safe fortune," commented Mr. Allen with a degree of irony happily lost on the Indian. Never had information, as to the possible future seemed so completely veiled, as that the old woman pretended to give out. To say nothing of generalities it was simply insipid.

Turning to Jane the Indian changed her tactics.

"The young lady make wish?" she asked.

"Oh, yes, certainly," responded Jane. She covered her twitching face with her hands. Then she looked up and nodded. "I have wished."

The Indian mixed more powder until the girls could no longer suppress a coughing fit. Mr. Allen looked vaguely at a window that was only a part of the scenery evidently, for vines were growing all over the ledge. He sighed and choked. Jane put up a detaining hand. She did not want her fortune interrupted.

"Much gold, much happiness, all the good luck," began Woo Nah diplomatically. "On the horse it is to be 'look out.' No run over hill in dark. Woo Nah see big hole much dark—no too much run wild." This advice was given in a tone of real warning.

Judith was delighted. Jane was being scolded for being too wild. She should not run away in

the dark with Firefly. What a good joke on Jane!

Then, as if fearing an ill effect on her audience, Woo Nah quickly turned her cards, by stirring up the smoky powder again.

"In the big city there is too much go," she now spoke with authority. "All go, go, not take rest for stars, or for great good in pale moon. Fiery head blaze to joy like paper with match, but no ashes keep for to-morrow. All blow away like Teekawata smoke," and she pointed her sharp finger at the smoke Mr. Allen was vainly trying to ward off.

"Riches always and good health. No sorrow but from home," she mumbled. "Friends come like the flowers, too thick to count, too thin for hold, but some stay so fast winter will not take. Girl with midnight cloud true for always; the one with the dried corn ropes," (she twisted her hands over her head to illustrate where the corn silk rested on the head of some one to be suspected) "of that one beware. She is for evil, for enemy for the—sneak." This last she fairly hissed, and in spite of themselves the girls' minds reverted to Marian Seaton, who had made so much trouble for Jane. She had the hair of changeable corn silk, sometimes brown, on good

days quite yellow, and between times a discouraged tawn.

"And my wish?" ventured Jane.

The old woman looked up and almost smiled. Perhaps she could see a good joke herself.

"It will—come—" she hesitated. The smoke was getting thin and its clouds were evidently difficult to translate. Finally she actually opened her mouth and swallowed what she could inhale of the vapor. Judith laughed outright, but Jane kept her eyes on the Indian in abject and wrapt attention. If she failed to "foretell" it would not be Jane's fault.

"Firehead shall have her wish," she exclaimed triumphantly, and Mr. Allen jumped to his feet to put the period on the "Kibosh." He had had enough of the Indian rubbish, and felt the girls had about all they could enjoy.

It may seem bromidic to say the Indian rubbed her palms as Mr. Allen thrust his in his pockets, she may even have suffered some irritation from the smoke she had been gathering, at any rate when Mr. Allen handed her over a good clean green dollar, she all but kissed it, the girls would have testified.

"From New York?" asked Woo Nah as they prepared to leave.

"Yes," replied Judith crisply.

"Woo Nah has friend New York. He make beauty," she patted her cheek to illustrate how her friend made beauty in New York.

"Oh, a beauty doctor," interrupted Jane.

"Yes, he send to Woo Nah and Woo Nah give the beauty medicine." She hobbled over to a box and raising the cover displayed a lot of dried herbs or possibly weeds.

"Young lady like?" she asked.

"Why, yes. If it will give us beauty," replied Jane with a quizzical smile at Judith, who was whispering to Mr. Allen.

"Make tea and wash hair with this," and Woo Nah picked up a handful of the dried leaves. "I put the sunset water in bottle," she took a small vial, into which she poured, from the big brown bottle, a very carefully measured out quantity of the colorless fluid. "This is for the face, and in the morning the beauty shines," she declared. Jane accepted the little bottle with a show of gratitude. Judith was still the doubter, and made queer eyes during all the presentation speech.

"We have had a lovely time," she did take the trouble to express. "Woo Nah, when you come to New York to see your friend the beauty doc-

tor, you must look for us. Ask for Wellington College," she finished, and, as if both girls could imagine that old Indian paying them a social call at the aristocratic Wellington, Jane and Judith bolted for the cabin door, and breathed more freely when out again in the refreshing air and struggling sunshine. It had cleared now and the sun was coming out.

"Oh, Aunt Mary!" exclaimed Jane contritely gathering up the bag and book. "Did we keep you too long?"

"I have my book," answered Miss Allen, who had been out of doors during all the seance. "Did you enjoy it?"

"Oh, yes, it was—funny," Jane said quietly. "Let's hurry. Dad will be too late for his telephoning. I feel guilty to have detained him for all that nonsense. Aunt Mary, I am to be beautiful. I have a lotion guaranteed to make me so," and she indicated the little bottle she held rather gingerly. Mr. Allen hurried to the old shack for the buckboard, and only the chatter of the two happy young girls marked the mileage of the home-going journey through the afternoon shadows of the Montana hills.

CHAPTER V

ON THEIR WAY

"BUT I am sort of perplexed," Jane admitted to Judith. "It was lovely, of course, for the boys to serenade us, and I think Fedario quite a sport to give us the ukelele, but how can we return the—compliment? I feel we ought to thank them, somehow."

"Couldn't we give them a straw ride?"

Jane burst out laughing. "Oh, Judy, you poor pale-face! Can you fancy giving cowboys a straw ride?"

"Now, Jane Allen, I did not mean to pack them all into one hay-rick or anything as grotesque as that," answered Judith in pique. "But couldn't we give them the picnic that goes at the end of the ride, and eliminate the ride?"

Another gale of laughter followed this suggestion. Judith plainly knew very little of the joys of ranch life.

"I really think," said Jane, "if we want to give them a good time we would have to make it a good game of poker, and that is altogether out of the question. Most of the ranch men think joy and gambling synonymous, and dad has all he can do to keep the sporting tendency within bounds. No, I guess we will just have to let them know somehow, how much we appreciated their concert. Then we must start seriously to prepare for our journey."

Judith's face darkened. She had had a wonderful time at El Capitan, and the thought of leaving was not a signal of joy.

"I shall hate to go," she sighed. "It has been divine, Janie."

"And glorious for me to have you, Judy." Jane twined her arm around the good friend. "I am not going to forget Woo Nah's prophecy. My good friend for always has the midnight hair." She touched Judith's dark tresses softly.

"Now, wasn't it the skylight eyes?" teased Judith.

"At any rate, I lined up Marian Seaton with the corn-silk hair," recalled Jane.

"And we are to be beautiful if we make a tea of the wild cinnamon and wash in it! Don't forget that."

"Oh, no," Jane corrected. "We wash in the silver solution. Old lady Woo Nah must know a little about chemistry, for that liquid is a solution of silver, and it certainly would bleach. I have tried it on Fliver and his nice brown coat has now a whitish patch. Fancy trying that on the skin of natural girls!"

It was one of the "last days" at El Capitan. Jane and Judith were exchanging opinions on so many topics, that they called the occasion their mental cleaning period. True, the matter of the cowboys' serenade, a musical event of importance in the ranch season, had not been satisfactorily disposed of, for the boys had really furnished a very creditable program with their ukes, banjoes, mouth organs, clippers and Dingo Joe's concertina. Fedario acted as leader, and Judith declared New York could furnish no greater thrill, even on a roof garden, than that which she experienced when the cyclone of sound broke loose under her window. Then, when she and Jane (chaperoned by Aunt Mary) appeared on the rose-vined balcony in their silken robes, the only regret expressed was that the moonlight would not give enough glare for focussing a picture on Jane's camera.

It was midnight when the Jap "cleany yupped"

after the spread furnished the serenaders, but no dance at its best, could have been more novel or enjoyable. The girls remained on their second floor balcony, while Mr. Allen descended to entertain in the big, roomy kitchen, but even from that distance Jane and Judith heard the "pieces spoke" and joined in the laughter following some of the ludicrous attempts at histrionic feats.

"After all," philosophized Mr. Allen, "living near to Nature makes children of us all, and our boys are mere kindergartners when it comes to home sports."

"I always feel like a leader in a Sunday school," commented Aunt Mary, "when we entertain them. It is surely a good work, and they are so appreciative."

"And I always feel like—well, as if I belonged to the idle rich, when the boys pay us a visit. It is so narrow to have to make class distinction, and feed them in the kitchen," Jane objected with a note of scorn in her voice.

"Now, Janie," insisted Judith, "didn't Woo Nah say something about Bolshevism and the Girl? Your sentiments sound rather extreme. Can you imagine Dingo Joe among forks?"

"Boy all samee too much grub," objected Willie Wing the cook. "Likee big cow."

The above is an excerpt from the conversation that sifted through the Allen home on the morning following the "doin's" catalogued as the Cowboys' Serenade. Jane and Judith both made copious notes of the occasion in their diaries, but in spite of these records the real story was not to be told in mere words. It required the language of the boys themselves to give the affair its actual color. This was, however, plentifully supplied all over the ranch for at least a day after, and the consensus of opinion seemed to be, "that Miss Allen was a peach," and her friend "some girl." Also "that Chief Allen ought to be president of the United States, and the little sister woman would be all right for the first lady of the land."

The boys had rehearsed for their concert for more than a week, and consequently what was not given in perfection was supplied in enthusiasm, and the memory of that performance, for actors and audience, would not soon be obliterated by the everyday work of life and its prosaic demands.

So it was that the last day at home for Jane Allen had arrived.

The presence of her friend, Judith, softened the usual sadness of the hour of parting. Mr. Allen was both father and companion to his high-

strung, brave little daughter, and the separation was necessarily momentous. Judith, alert to the situation, bubbled around, blowing in and out, on all the little love scenes, managing adroitly to curtail Jane's meditation before the reverenced picture of "Dearest," Jane's departed mother.

"I can imagine what will happen when we take up our New York quarters," she prophesied as Jane was all velvet-eyed and unnaturally quiet after a "word" with Aunt Mary. "I am so glad I can go with you, and not be required to report home first. Our folks will be resting until Kingdom Come after that Coast tour. We had so many delays and mixups."

"Oh, I could never go to housekeeping without you, Judy," Jane replied brightening. "I dream of the shopping tours and the hunting trips, and I match colors with my Polish girl's eyes, and take samples of her hair to bed with me. I have not really decided on her hair, although I rather incline to blonde."

"Oh, of course. I never saw a Polish girl other than a blonde," declared Judith. "But, Janie, I cannot help wondering how your daddy trusts you with so much—money. This will be very expensive."

"You forget, Judy dear, that I am his confidential clerk. I could run this entire ranch if daddy were incapacitated. He misses Dearest so much I feel I must be more than just plain daughter to him," and her soft gray eyes became suspiciously misty again.

"Well, I'm packed. Thank goodness my trunks went on from the coast! Do you remember how I packed someone's dress in my bag at Wellington? It may be funny to one's friends, to do absurd things through absent mindedness, but it simply terrifies me to think of what I may do with others' money and such trifles. Aren't you afraid, Janie dear, I will run off with some of your family plate?"

"Not the leastest bit," and Jane swung around to give her chum a punctuating hug. "Judy, haven't you promised to keep your failing for your enemies, and never to work it off on your friends?" she reminded the girl, who was fairly dancing around the spacious room, as if wanting to cover every inch of it before bidding good bye to El Capitan.

"Yes, I know, Janie. But I have a horror of certain things," and she glanced quizzically at the wonderful silver set on Jane's mahogany dresser. "Then, too, I might walk in my sleep

and—go right down stairs and talk sweetly to Fedario on one of his serenade sprees. But, Janie, I shall never forget—to—love—you."

The journey East began next morning.

"It must be the quiet of the country that gives you such a wonderful set of nerves," Judith ruminated when they had reached their compartment. "I always feel I must explode, even when there is no chance of combustion. Here we are, without a hair lost, and I felt ten minutes ago we would never make this train."

"Perhaps it is sort of self reliance," Jane ventured. "We ranchers never miss a train—wouldn't dare to, we would have to wait too long for the next; but neither would we feel justified in getting all ruffled up in excitement. That is bad for—georgette crepe," she finished, smoothing the texture mentioned, in her dainty little blouse, that had brushed up the least bit in the final good byes.

"Now we can think of Wellington," proposed Judith, settling back comfortably.

"I just can't bear to see Montana running away from me, so I refuse to look," and she wheeled her chair around, back to window.

"As you like," agreed Jane. "But I am so fond of all the high spots of Yellowstone I want

a very 'lastest' look. But let's to Wellington. I do wonder how many of the old set will be back? The war has changed so many homes, we may have to take over an entirely new contingent."

"Best luck," commented Judith. "We may thus eliminate the undesirables."

"And get a lot very much worse," feared Jane.

"How could we, with Marian Seaton?"

"But we had Adrienne, and Norma and Dorothy—they more than outbalanced the rebels."

"Well, I claim," and Judith produced the inevitable box of chocolates from her Indian beaded bag, "I claim that a girl who does not love—me or you, is not normal, for it is perfectly evident and obvious, and other synonyms, that we are simply—charming." When Judith "went in the movies" even so far as to act a scene in the drawing room car, she never failed to "register" strong emotion.

CHAPTER VI

JOURNEY DE LUXE

"JUDITH," said Jane with the solemnity of a senior, "I really feel we are facing a momentous year. Sports must be revived with vigor——"

"Oh, you will take care of that, Janie dear," interrupted Judith. "Even when I want to sleep a bit late o' morning, and have been reading a little after hours the night before, I recall you have a knack of getting me out to practice. Now remember, girl, I positively refuse to hike a la empty. I must have my porridge first."

"But as I was saying about sports," returned Jane, "I am ambitious for this year. We ought to make it the banner year for basketball."

"And we shall," declared her chum. "With the skill you developed last season, and the wonderful team work we marshalled, I don't see why

we shouldn't be able to go out, and simply eat up the other colleges. I've been playing bean bag with the Jap cook in Los Angeles to keep in trim."

"Thought beans were too costly to toss around," joked Jane. "Judy, look at that dear little old lady over there," indicating a chair near the rear of the car. "Just see the sampler she is working."

"Yes," and Judith swung a bit towards the aisle. "I have been watching her. She is working a family tree. Wonder for whose hope chest."

"I was surprised to know that mothers are now making samplers for their sons," Jane followed. "Seems rather queer for boys to encroach on the girls' fancies. I know a mother who has two boys, and she has a family sampler made for each. Also, she has a wonderfully stocked hope chest for them. Seems to me she must have had some difficulty in choosing the hopefuls."

"Suppose she made it all face cloths, and socks and neckties. But really, I don't see what she could collect that would keep in style. A hope chest for boys! Ridiculous!" sneered Judith.

"Some boys are very sentimental, you know," Jane reminded her.

"But mothers should not encourage such weakness," protested Judith.

"Well, I hope your boy has a chest full of—chocolates," and Jane helped herself to the disappearing confection.

"I haven't had a chance to show you my new vanity case," Judith broke in. "Don't you think it pretty?" and she produced what looked like a little medicine emergency kit. It was of black stiff leather and made square, absolutely contrary in effect to the soft velvet pouches so long in vogue.

"Oh, isn't it lovely!" enthused Jane. "And such a mirror!"

"Yes, I can almost see how my skirt hangs with it. I found it at a fair in Frisco. It was a prize sample. And, Jane dear, I have one for you, in a brown that matches your hair, but I was so disappointed that the initials were not on it, and I had to send it back. It will be ready, though, by the time we get to New York once again."

"Oh, how—wonderful!" and Jane squeezed the hand that still brushed the candy box. "Judy, I have held off from a 'vanity' because I have been too vain to invest in one. Do you know, I think, honestly, that when we deliberately ignore con-

ventions we usually do it through pride? Too proud to depend on a traveling boudoir."

"Oh, no, dearie, not at all," contradicted Judith. "Only, you can depend on your looks staying—regular Yale. There, that's a joke. Jane Allen has Yale locks of copper and—iron. Warranted not to yield, nor break, nor open without the registered key. But I know, Janie, you will like your bag. I was no end disappointed not to bring it along with me."

"But it is rather nice to have one surprise saved," Jane insisted. "We have been using up a lot of joys lately, don't you think?"

"Yes, we have been joying extravagantly," agreed Judith. "But Wellington has a reserve stock, you know. Just think of our little Helka. Did we decide she had blue or gray eyes?"

"Oh, they must be blue, we have too many grays," Jane replied. "But what concerns me most of all is the adorable task of fitting her out in school togs. Wasn't it lovely dad's scholarship went to a real little—primitive? That is, I suppose she is unspoiled, although how do we know? She may not deign to look at us," and Jane smiled at the incongruity.

"Wouldn't it be a joke," soliloquized Judith. "What if she is a pre-war aristo'? And suppose

she only touches Wellington at the extreme corners? Might even be a little nobility snob, for all we know."

"The more fun in store at the discoveries," Jane said. "But I feel she will be just as I picture her. A little blonde, with blue eyes and a name no one can pronounce."

"What does Helka mean?"

"Oh, that is Helen in Polish. As she is a 'Helen' I think she will be pretty. They mostly are," Jane reflected.

"But Helen Bender is a bit cross-eyed," Judith had to recall, whereat they both laughed, for Helen had a trick of blaming her eyes for every school mistake. Her uncertain eyes had stood her in good stead at difficult tests, etc.

"Soon night will be upon us," Judith prophesied, noting the shadows that fell in ripples over the revolving rills. "Just see the sunset. How different from the red blaze we used to have on the Lake."

"And the smoke of the approaching city," Jane reminded. "Shall we get off for a little rest at St. Paul? We can, if you wish."

"When do we get to the great city?"

"To-morrow afternoon. But between here and there we will glimpse the Middle West.

Very different from the scenery on the other end of the trip."

"Yes, indeed, but it is all America, so of course we love it," Judith orated. "But, Janie dear, we might lose ourselves in St. Paul. I have heard such horrible tales of the girls at railway stations being picked up by bandits and carried off for ransom," and she doubled up at the joyous thought of such an escapade.

"Well, if you feel that way about it we had best keep to our bunks," Jane decided. "I am acquainted with the station and the big park with the sun dial——"

"And the big drygoods store where you bought my silkies," recalled Judith. "But, Jane dear, perhaps we had better keep to the rail. You know what the Indian woman told us? She might be out there on hand just to work out the fortune."

"Moved and carried that we omit the stop over," Jane answered. "Now, Judy, let us brush up a little. I have a premonition we are going to meet someone very interesting in the dining car. I saw that yellow-haired woman smuggle a little poodle in her hand bag. It will surely be interesting if she carries him into the diner. It always is. The porters know a dog by the

bends in the bag. And they go through a regular screen play in getting the lady, the bag, and the poodle out of the car. Dogs must eat in the baggage car. They have a co-operative refrectory there."

"Oh, yes, and the yellow-haired lady has some paper plates. I saw her drop a brace of them, and one rolled way down to the young man with the specks. It was too funny to see him jerk up and look. Guess he thought he was having a fit of eye stigmatis," and Judith bit her red lips with the afore-mentioned pearly teeth. "See, the dear boy is reading something like a dictionary. Wonder if he is a new prof going East to try his luck in some co-ed college? Thank goodness we can't get anything like that. The dear old ladies are bad enough, but can you picture Percy handling Mazie?"

"In math for instance," assisted Jane. "I wonder if she will know any more about cubes this year?"

"More likely she has become proficient in cubes for the complexion," Judith put in. "But honestly, Jane, I am so anxious to see them all, good, bad and indifferent, that I would just like to fall asleep and wake up at Wellington. Wouldn't you?"

"Well, I am anxious to get back. But between here and there I hope to pick up a good time or two. Now let's to the primping room. No line there yet. Wait until we get around Chicago. Then we will have to take our turn. I wonder what daddy is doing just now? I always feel a tiny bit lonesome first night——"

"Oh, no, you don't, dearie, as the chorus girls say. It is my special privilege to have the glumps," and Judith's smile, filtering through the alleged gloom made comedy of her words. "There, I had to leave El Capitan just when I passed my first test in serenades, and when I was becoming expert in cowboy phraseology. Fedario admitted I 'sabied' beautifully, and Pedro declared the horses knew my yodle. Then I had to tear myself away for hard work at Wellington!"

"I'll be good," begged off Jane, who realized the effort at regrets was being made to offset her "glumps." Judith would not have Jane other than smiling. "First at the big mirror," as they made for the dressing room. "See the little old lady with the sampler! Let us greet her in passing," whispered the youthful junior.

But the best laid plans of school girls may be upset by the exigencies of rail travel, for in pass-

ing the little old lady, both young ladies were all but precipitated into her black silk lap. The apologies that followed served as fitting introduction, with the result of both girls falling victims to the charm of her complaisant culture, rounded out with satisfying years. The little lady was a thoroughbred, an old school new method graduate. And the girls, keen of perception and generous with appreciation, became acquainted at once with a promise of developing interest along the route.

"I am going to be like that when I grow old," predicted Judith. "And I am going to make samplers for—well, maybe for the cowboys of El Capitan! Just now they fill my vision and my vocabulary."

"Judy, do be careful, dear," admonished Jane, "you almost knocked off the—'prof's' glasses," and Jane could not suppress a titter as her chum just escaped the student, her hand bag swinging with an unexpected lurch of the car. It was fun to roll through the aisle, for every step gave the sensation of a sea voyage on land. Only the big velour chairs stood between the travellers and damage to their fellow passengers.

"What a roomy room!" commented Judith, entering the ladies' dressing compartment.

"And all to ourselves. I feel almost like dressing for dinner. Do you suppose, Janie, we will meet any interesting—persons at table? I have kept my rainbow georgette waist within call. Shall I don it?"

"As to interesting persons, I expect to spend my time interviewing the specked professor," Jane surprised Judith by declaring. "I feel he can impart information that may be very useful when I tackle my new year stuff. He looks wise enough to possess tabloid codes, and trots, that might put us through the most difficult forensics," said Jane with characteristic deliberation. Of course the threat to take up with the queer looking young student (he was surely a student) was made to tease Judith, who wanted fun and frolic even aboard the Limited.

"As you like," replied Judith, surveying her tall form in its close-fitting blue velveteen. "But I think I shall find the little blonde lady quite talkable. I shall offer to exchange recipes for her shade of hair. I should love to try hers on Marian's."

All of which was pure nonsense really, as neither girl had any idea of speaking to the strangers mentioned.

"I am so glad we wore these gowns," Jane re-

marked critically. "Most tourists seem to select the very dingiest, drabest, hatefullest old travelling togs, when it is bad enough to look well at the very best, under railroad conditions."

"Yes, that was your happy thought, *ma chère*. I should have worn the aforesaid hateful thing in tan, if I had not espied your lovely brown velveteen waiting to be donned. That led me to my one best, the blue."

They were all primped and freshened, and now inspecting the result in the long mirror, while the train rumbled and rolled over the hills and valleys leading into the Middle West. Their personally expressed satisfaction at the picture reflected was pardonable, for the two girls, the one light enough to all but blaze, the other dark enough to all but glitter, arms entwined and heads close together, filled the mirror frame with as pretty a study as any artist might wish to paint.

Eventually, out in the car, as the tourists were making their way to the diner, many critical eyes, all of them surely approving, followed the two Wellington girls, Jane and her chum, Judith.

CHAPTER VII

LOST—A GIRL

"WHAT a wonderful sleep!" Jane was just stretching out in her bunk. "I suppose Judy is up and dressed, and interviewing the crew." She pulled the little window curtain back cautiously, and sent her half-opened eyes after the fleeting landscape. "And a lovely day. I am glad of that, for even in a train one enjoys fresh, clean weather." She slipped into the dark blue travelling kimono, and slippers to match, in which Jane might make her way to the dressing room without attracting undue attention. Thus attired she put her hand up to give the curtain of the upper, Judy's berth, a signal yank.

"Judith," she called lightly. "Are you up, Judith?"

No answer. Her chum was, she presumed,

dressed and out for exercise. With the convenient little dressing bag Jane hurried off to make her day's toilette, being assured she would meet Judith either on the way to, or in the ladies' room.

But Judith was not in sight, neither along the way nor in the dressing-room. Jane made her toilette in haste, and thus refreshed from the "wonderful sleep" polished off with accessories of the best travelling comforts, she stepped from the compartment.

"Where can Judy be?" she asked herself in some anxiety. Then the entire length of the coach was covered, to make sure the girl had not buried herself deep in a seat beside some new-found acquaintance. But no Judy was to be sighted.

Jane returned to her berth and signalled the porter he might "make it up." At an opportune moment she asked him had he seen her friend.

"No, Miss, that is, not since quite early. She went out to the observation, but I saw her come back. No one out there now," replied the white-linened porter.

The thought of the observation car, with its open-end vestibule gave Jane a little shiver. Of course Judith was accustomed to travel. Noth-

ing could happen to her. Still, where was she?

"I'll take another look in the observation," she remarked. "I fancy she might like to see early morning developing." And Jane left the porter with his tasks.

It seemed everyone was passing into their breakfast with that avidity so marked in hotels and "en routes," when people have so little to think of except eating, drinking and sleeping. Jane felt the call of an appetite herself, but had no thought of going to breakfast without Judith. Where could the girl be? Each probable rendezvous uncovered negatively, added to Jane's momentarily increasing anxiety.

"Strange!" she commented. "Judy is always ready to exchange notes in the morning. She would hardly undertake anything so absorbing as to keep her away all this time. Besides, what could she find engrossing on this Limited?"

Finally realizing she could not find her chum, she sought out her faithful porter. Not delaying to ring the bell, Jane looked about and soon found Alfred (this was his name she overheard) arranging cushions on the rear sofa, for a baby to rest there.

"I can't locate my friend," she began. "Have you seen her?"

"Say, Alf," interrupted another member of the working force coming up from the next car. "I got a—what do you call a sonomballist? The sort that plays baseball in a sound sleep," the black-faced man grinned. "I got a strange lady in a strange place, and she belongs in your car. You got to extract her."

"What—what you—all mean, Ferd?" asked Alf, while Jane waited apprehensively.

"You come along wiff me and I'll demonstrate," proposed Ferd, otherwise Ferdinand. "I'se been argufying wiff de lady, didn't like to shake her zactly. But she don't pear to want to come back to you, Alf. She has took a notion to me." He grinned and chuckled in the good nature characteristic of the well-trained Pullman porter.

Jane listened with increasing anxiety. It might really be Judith, but where was she?

"What you asked for, please?" Alfred inquired of Jane. "Ferdinand has no 'cuse to interrupt," he apologized.

"Oh, that was all right," Jane quickly assured him. "I wonder if he may have found my—friend?"

"Not likely a young lady," said Alfred with a strong emphasis on *young*. As if an *old* lady

might be suspected of anything queer, but that a young miss would assuredly hardly be so careless.

"But my friend is very absent minded," Jane prepared him. "She does queer things through forgetfulness."

"Can you come right now?" insisted the waiting Ferd to Jane's porter. "I'se got to get rid of this—lady somehow."

"I'll go too, if I may?" timidly inquired Jane. "I have lost a friend" (this to Ferd). "She is very absent minded."

"Laikly she is my—discovery," ventured the colored man striving to be polite and finding it difficult to treat the situation seriously. "Come right along."

At the other end of the car Jane stood stock still, as she read the sign "Gentlemen Smoking." But Ferd promptly assured her.

"Not a soul in here but the lady. Not a man could get in, and there was some kicking. All right for ladies to smoke. Lots of 'em do, but they has to have their own private quarters." He was opening the door of the smoking room with that caution usually displayed if a cat is expected to jump. Jane followed, and once within the room she sprang to the curled up figure, sleeping

peacefully, in the big cushioned chair. It was Judith!

"Judith!" Jane called. "Judy, wake up! Come!"

The unconscious girl slowly—too slowly, came back to the realm of directed thought. She was awake at last.

"Why—Jane—" she drawled. "What's the fuss? I was dreaming about wonderful cigars."

Both porters stepped back respectfully—or to laugh safely. Dreaming of cigars appealed to their sense of humor.

"Judith—this is the gentlemen's smoking room," Jane breathed, trying hard to drag the still drowsy girl to her feet. "How ever did you get in here?"

By this time Judith realized something was wrong. She gathered the folds of her Burgundy robe tight around her, and tried to inflict a severe look on the giggling porters.

"You sure did hol' de fort, Miss," Ferd insisted on saying. "The gent-men had to go without their smoke this morning."

Too embarrassed for further conversation the girls stole out of the usurped room. Just at the little turn in the aisle, the very narrow place where a crowd is always trying to squeeze by at

once, they encountered a group of would-be smokers ready to defend their rights. They were talking none too meekly, and seeing the girl still in negligee one had the poor taste to remark: "There she is. Some sleeper!"

Judith blushed to the roots of her dark hair, but Jane glanced at the bounder defiantly. Didn't he have manners enough to respect a girl who was just absent minded?

"A good thing they had to—fast a little," Jane whispered in Judith's ear. "It won't hurt them any. They smoke enough now to fumigate the car with the fumes they carry out of that room. Pretty room, isn't it?" She smiled to give back Judith's assurance.

"Oh, I am so embarrassed," murmured Judith. "And have I actually been sleeping there, and keeping that raft of men outside?"

"Oh, yes, dear, but that is nothing to worry about," the kind-hearted Jane protested. "In war times they had to go without smoking or should have. Now they can't seem to live a moment on the train, without the company of their cigars. Do let us hurry in to breakfast!"

But even the reliable good nature and love of humor, characteristic of Judith was some time in returning to the very much embarrassed girl.

CHAPTER VIII

NEW YORK AT LAST

"IF there is one thing I like more than all the other things about a long railway journey," said Judith, as they alighted at the great Metropolis terminal, "it is the end. I love to get off."

"I rather agree with you," Jane almost sighed, for the trip from Montana, while pleasantly varied with incidents of interest, was really all tuned and keyed up to the actual pleasure of reaching New York.

"How good it is to be back, after all," pursued Judith. "I hope we will have no trouble in finding Mrs. Weatherbee. She is so eminently systematic, as our train was on time, she ought to be in sight now."

"Oh, I am sure she will be here," Jane added, as they edged along with the throng, threading

their way out into the open space under the great glass canopy of the New York Central. The magnitude of the building seemed to dwarf the lines and group of persons, filing in and out, and coming and going—as the old man said, like people without any homes.

"There she is!" exclaimed Jane as she caught sight of the dignified Mrs. Weatherbee, director of Wellington. "And she has a young girl with her."

"Our Helka!" exclaimed Judith, jamming into a haughty woman with the perpetual poodle under her arm. "Oh, I am sure that is our little artist," as the slight young girl, in very dark costume advanced with Mrs. Weatherbee.

There was no time for a reply from Jane, for the smiling Wellington lady and her companion now caught sight of the girls, and were advancing quickly.

"Just in time," Mrs. Weatherbee exclaimed with more precision than originality. "How splendidly you both look!"

Then the usual hand shaking, and exchange of courtesies included the introduction to Miss Helka Podonsky.

So the girls at last beheld the object of their long outstanding guesses and conjectures!

Yes, Helka was pretty—she was different, and she was surely attractive. Her hair tangled around her ears and made the most adorable little puffs. Its shade was dark, not black, but more dark than brown. All of these details were easily observed, and the girls absorbed them, but the color of her eyes—Jane thought they blue, Judith thought them brown, and neither knew how to classify the flashes and "volts" the little stranger shot out from under the long curly lashes. But that she was lovely each silently agreed.

"This is our friend who is coming with us to Wellington," Mrs. Weatherbee explained, in that formal way "the faculty" always take to say unnecessary things. 'She is delighted with the prospect," another superfluous banality.

"Oh, yes, it will be very—nice," spoke Helka, and her accent betrayed the slightest foreign tinge. Her words seemed carefully chosen, but she did not hiss her "s" nor choke her "e." Jane was glad the voice and accent would not excite undue prejudice.

"I am sure it will be perfectly jolly," Judith hurried to add, and in her effort to speak clearly she chose the very word a stranger might not understand. "Jolly" was not included in the

usual English phrases given in foreign school text books.

"Yes?" Helka ventured to answer, and her rising inflection might easily span a sea of doubt.

"Oh, it will be—delightful," Jane took great pains to qualify. She had no intention of confusing Helka, and wished above all things to impress her with a sense of companionship.

Yet there was a certain strain apparent. Helka did not "fall on her knees, or neck" after the manner of the proteges in children's books, neither did "her eyes fill with tears of silent appreciation." Nevertheless the three girls, with their college director, were going through that process of self consciousness bordering on embarrassment.

"Can't we go to the rest room for a few moments?" asked Jane. "I think we will have a better chance to get acquainted sitting down," she declared.

Quick to catch the possible humor of this remark Helka smiled broadly, and the set of teeth she exposed caused the girls again to exchange knowing glances. Now, Judith had wonderful teeth. In fact, she might claim championship in the tooth beauty contest, did Wellington carry such a sport, but Helka's! They were so small,

so even and so white, matched pearls indeed. Thoughts of the pure grain foods of Poland filtered through Jane's mind, while Judith wondered about Polish dentifrice.

All this time it never occurred to either of the Wellington girls, that the stranger might be having an equally interesting time analyzing and cataloging them, and their characteristics. Egotism has various methods of taking care of her own.

In the big, leathered rest room, a comfortable corner was available, and here our quartette soon ensconced themselves. Mrs. Weatherbee really looked quite human, Judith was deciding, her Oxford tailored suit being sufficiently de luxe to be spelled "tailleur." It was nobby, to take up a word from the English allies, and not give all the credit to the French.

"Now, my dears," spoke the model, "I have a plan to unfold to you. Helka wishes to stay in some private place, that is, she does not wish to get into any very public place."

She stopped, for Helka was silently inferring so much that her attitude demanded attention. She was sort of shaking her head and biting her red lips and flashing her unclassified eyes.

"Not a lovely hotel?" asked Jane in surprise.

She had really counted on showing this little stranger life in a big New York hotel.

"Oh, no, please not. No hotel. I would not like that. There are so many—men and women." Helka was almost shuddering, and Judith instantly sensed the mystery promised about the Polish girl's antecedents. Jane, acting in the capacity of hostess, immediately agreed to shun all hotels.

"I wanted to tell you," said Mrs. Weatherbee, "that for the present I have arranged with a former member of the staff of Wellington, a retired chaperon, to take you young ladies in her charge in New York. As Miss Allen had informed me she wished to stay in the city for some days, I thought it my duty to see that you were all safely—chaperoned." She smiled humanly, Judith admitted, but visions of a retired chaperon did not exactly forecast a very jolly good time. Even a working "nurse maid," as the attendants were sometimes facetiously styled, would be better than one who was old enough to be retired. Jane was struggling with similar fears.

"She has quite an apartment," went on the matron. "In fact, she has been entertaining some social service students who take care of them-

selves in her apartment, and I thought that would be just the thing for you three little girls."

"I am sure it will be!" Jane exclaimed, now seeing light through the clouds. "I have always longed to try housekeeping as the college settlement girls do, and it may give us valuable experience."

"Oh, glorious!" exclaimed Judith. 'I vote to be—parlor maid."

"It would be very nice," ventured Helka, "if we could have a very small house and our own—piano."

"Oh, of course, Helka, dear," Mrs. Weatherbee hurried to inject. "You must have access to a piano. You cannot be deprived of your music."

The luminous eyes flashed their appreciation at this, and Jane felt as if even a rest room was quite inadequately furnished, with no piano, at that moment, in sight. This little artist should have some sort of pocket edition to carry around with her. She was different and artistic and her moods should be humored. Of a certainty they would go at once to the apartment with the home cured piano, as Judith called any instrument not installed in a school room.

"Miss Jordan expects us," said Mrs. Weatherbee, "I was sure a good cup of real tea would

refresh you both after your journey." She picked up the flat brief case Judith always carried in lieu of a suit case. Jane adjusted her own club bag, preparatory for the start. Helka insisted on taking the brace of umbrellas. So the little party wended their way to the surface car, Jane naturally falling in step with Helka and Judith trotting along with Mrs. Weatherbee.

"Adorable!" Judith at last had a chance to exclaim.

"I knew you would like her," smiled Mrs. Weatherbee. "She is a wonderful girl. And she has such an interesting history."

Just as it had all been planned!

"Jane's luck," commented Judith. "Mrs. Weatherbee, we are going to make Jane Allen, Center, this year. And we are going to make our team known all over the college circuit. Basketball is an American sport, and we are back from the war now with reconstruction energy."

"I believe you," assented the matron, and her tone implied satisfaction.

Jane was meanwhile becoming agreeably acquainted with Helka.

CHAPTER IX

GIRLS' LIFE A LA MODE

HOUSEKEEPING, however irksome when a positive duty, is always a delight when "tried on" in miniature.

So it was when the Wellington girls installed themselves in Miss Jordan's apartment, they had no idea of the novelty in store for them. The house was one of the old mansions now falling into the shadow of the Village. The Village, we recall, is that part of New York City where artists of various sorts congregate, and live the life they term Bohemian. Incidentally, there are many within the village who will never have any claim to the title artist—other than to have possessed the ambition to be so classified, but like half the aspirants for honors, they may aspire, but not conspire, as they do not work honestly to achieve the place they pretend to appropriate.

But our girls did not go within the village limits; they were just at its "gates" and so had an opportunity of observing the interesting types of girls and young women passing in and out, affecting the Bohemian.

Long-haired men and short-haired women. Velvet-jacketed men and cloth-upholstered women—such persistent contradictions lending a peculiar picturesqueness to the otherwise prosaic Metropolis.

A kitchenette and two sleeping rooms had been assigned to the Wellingtons by Miss Jordan, the larger dining room being shared by two groups. Miss Jordan explained she had found the individual kitchen indispensable, for all girls had their own ideas about kitchen work, while a dining room might be made communal, many persons having similar table habits, obviously. The living room was delightful. A long, high ceiled drawing room originally. Miss Jordan had preserved the splendor of the crystal chandelier, and the glory of the hand carved marble mantel. Here all the girls were wont to congregate in their evenings, and those of them who had the opportunity came together around the square piano or curled themselves up with books in the bay window's cushions in the late afternoons.

The clientele was sufficiently varied to be interesting, at the same time Miss Jordan personally vouched for the general standing of each of her paying guests. In fact, the rendezvous for young girls who might be in New York temporarily, and without personal chaperons, was a real innovation, and it did fill a perfectly legitimate long-felt want.

"Home was never like this," declared Judith, passing the chocolates to a little dark-haired art student, who had just come in from a morning's work in a co-operative studio. The art student called herself Anaa Kole, and just why she insisted on the second "a" to her otherwise plain Ana had not yet been discovered by Judith. It looked to her like a waste of type, that could not be vocally made use of.

"Miss Jordan is so motherly," admitted Anaa. "I sometimes wonder what I should have done if I had not found her apartment. I came here because my college directed me to."

"That is just what happened to me," Judith declared. "I came here because Wellington actually toted me to the doorstep. Have some more chocolates, do!"

"Oh, thank you, I do like sweets when I am tired. What are you studying?"

"Here? Nothing especially. We are just getting ready for our junior year. All but Miss Podonsky. She is just beginning."

"Isn't she dear? But why does she run every time the bell rings?"

"Does she? I hadn't noticed," prevaricated Judith. "She is a little shy, being a stranger, I suppose."

"And she never practices when anyone is around. I have so wished to hear her play her violin. I am sure she is a wonder at it. But every time I do have the good luck to come in while she is playing she stops instantly as I enter."

"Don't you think most geniuses are peculiar?" parried Judith. "Helen will not play for us unless—well, unless Miss Allen especially requests it. She adores Jane."

"I don't blame her," admitted Anaa. "I am charmed with her myself. She is one of the girls with rare character who is not forever advertising it. When I came in with wet feet the other night she did not insist on me draining her chocolate pot. Most girls do, and I abhor hot drinks for wet feet."

Judith laughed. Anaa was naive, if a trifle conspicuous with her bobbed hair. Of course

bobbed hair was so comfy, and so becoming, too bad it was not the general style, mused Judith, patting her own heavy coil, that would slip down her neck every time she attempted to relax outside of bed quilts.

"I shall almost hate to leave for school," Judith supplied. "It has been so jolly here."

"I do not find New York exactly a playground," Miss Kole followed, "but, then, I am studying."

"Of course that's different. We are shopping, shopping and after meals shopping again. I wonder if there are any bargains left? I adore buying pretty underlies, but I am not so keen on the practicals. But my friend Jane has set up enough stuff to make a hope chest for all Wellington."

"She is from the West, you said?"

"Yes, from Montana. But that does not mean that she has never seen pretty things before and is overdoing it," Judith hurried to qualify in justice to Jane.

"Oh, of course not. I did not mean to infer that," Miss Kole apologized. "But I do think Westerners, as a rule, are so much more generous, and so much more enthusiastic than the cold Easterners. I am from New England, and

all I can remember of holidays around home is that the rag rugs were taken off the carpets, and the powdered sugar sprinkled over the doughnuts. Life in my home was always a question of rivalry in economy. When I came here I set out for days to buy every imaginable sort of food I had been reading labels of all my life. Of course at college I had all I wanted, but even there it was not on my own initiative. I longed to find out how it felt to be free to buy without a pencil, and paper and premium list."

"Oh, don't call your home town such hard names," Judith put in kindly. "I am quite sure it has made you very dependable. I wouldn't wonder if a term there would fit me for life with much better qualifications than I can now boast of. But here come Jane and Helen." (They had Americanized the Helka.) "And now more bundles."

"Oh, the darlingest tams," announced Jane, dropping down on the big sofa. "I just had to carry them home to show you. Couldn't wait for delivery. See Anaa," to Miss Kole, "aren't they perfectly dear?"

"Oh, this year's tams are really classic," contributed the art student.

Judith already had the hunter's green, soft

velvet tam on her frowsy head. "Jane, which is mine?"

"Well, I did not know what you would like best with your riding habit. It would have been too uncertain to guess at the green, and the brown was rather dark, so I thought perhaps this burgundy would go."

"Stunning, perfectly so!" exclaimed Judith. "I have always wanted wine color and been afraid to try it. Isn't it wonderful?" And the lovely soft little cap was coaxed to a proper angle on the dark head.

"And this is Helen's," Jane shook from its wrappers another cap of a deep violet hue. Helen blushed prettily as Judith insisted on trying it on her curly head.

"Oh, look, girls!" Judith suddenly exclaimed, grasping Helen and swinging her around unceremoniously. "Now I know the color of her eyes! They are pure violet."

The unexpected exclamation, and the energy of Judith's swing gave Helen a perceptible start. For a moment she seemed about to dash off. She changed color from flush to pallor and was surely trembling. Then realizing it was all a joke, she quickly regained her composure, but not before the girls had noted her curious atti-

tude and alarm. Even Jane, slow to criticise, could not but admit Helen was frightened, and at such a trifle!

Why was she always so fearful? What was there for her to be so markedly nervous about?

That she had asked, and even insisted that the Polish name of Helka Podonsky be changed to the American substitute, Helen Powderly, had seemed reasonable enough to the girls, when just after their arrival in New York Helen explained that name meant "power" and while the "sky" stood for distinction in Poland, it would mean nothing but possible ridicule in her school life. To this Jane and Judith had assented. Perhaps it would be best, they agreed, not to antagonize the less broadminded girls with the foreign title. Also, Helen had so earnestly wished it. All this flashed before their minds now, when a simple girlish exclamation caused a panic of fear. It must be nerves, of course. Perhaps Helen had studied too hard in qualifying for the scholarship!

Girls are often jumpy, but not often quite so easily overcome, Jane thought.

"But what shall we do with so many hats?" asked Helen naïvely recovering herself. "We shall be at school always."

"Oh, not half of always," replied Jane. "You see, Helen, we must ride, I haven't told you about your horse (the violet eyes widened with pleasure) and then," continued Jane, "we are going on all sorts of hikes and hunts and outside jaunts. We are going to beg you in as a junior. Sometimes the juniors, that's Judith and me, are allowed to have what we call pupils. It isn't really catalogued but we occasionally get a younger girl to go with us, so that we may try out our knowledge on her."

"Yes, and my particular stunt is," Judith acclaimed, trying her tam at another angle, "to get a girl who knows more than I do, and let her try out her knowledge on me. Last year I found a perfect wizard in Meta Noon. She knew more about bi-ology than I shall ever have a chance to learn, and in the woods—what Meta didn't tell me about queer bugs, and buzzards and beetles and bombus and—well, I was buzzing for a week after one hike."

"After all," sighed Anaa, "school days have a charm. But we never realize it until it is gone."

"Then of what value is the charm?" asked Jane.

"Exactly like cutting a tooth—only good after all the cutting is done," decided Judith.

"We take no note of time but from its loss,

you know the poet says," followed Jane, "and I often think of the concise truth of that statement. We do not even know it is the hour until the hour is past. Oh, la-la! but we are getting philosophical. Personally, I am more interested in the kitchenette at this moment. Judith, it is your turn to do the K. P."

"What ever branch of the A. E. F. instituted the Kitchen Police should have been tried by court martial," blurted Judith. "The K. P. is a duty for the enemy, not for the home guard," and she dove for the divan and the chocolate crumbs.

"Oh, do let me get the dinner again," begged Helen. "You know I love to. The little place is like a—baby play house."

"Oh, yes, Helen, do run along and play," promptly agreed Judith. "As it is my turn, I give you full permission——"

"Judy Stearns," called Jane in mock severity. "You are an awful fraud. Helen is too good to you. I shall make you do guard duty this evening when we are out in the park. Besides, I am not going to give you your surprise."

She got no further. The tall girl bounced over the room after Jane, who was ducking

nimbly only to be finally enmeshed in cushions and portieres.

"Will you give it to me?" commanded Judith. "Or shall I wrest it from you! And what is it and where is it? Maybe a telegram, summoning me to my jolly cowboys' wedding or funeral. Oh, shall I ever be able to forget my jolly cowboys?"

"Easy, girls, easy," cautioned Anaa. "Miss Jordan is putty in our hands, until we attempt football with her cushions. Then she turns alabaster. Don't, Judith, it is a lot better to 'don't' than to 'did.' Take the advice of a good friend."

At this the chase was halted. Jane was panting from the shaking and choking Judith had administered, while Judith was looking for the ever fractious hairpins, the same being the last of a precious set of shell pins imported from the Western coast. Judith and hairpins were always at painful odds.

"Judy," said Jane seriously, "do you realize our days are flying and we will be due at Wellington very soon?"

"Oh, Jane Allen! You horrid girl! Can't I have a day's peace here in this wonderful New York without having Wellington poked at me?" and Judith facetiously jabbed at her eyes. "I have a very good mind to play hookey."

Anaa had slipped out of the room, leaving Jane and Judith together.

"Jane," whispered Judith, "whatever do you suppose makes Helen so nervous about strangers? She is positively timid in crowds. And when a man with queer whiskers, the Russian kind, brushed by us to-day on the avenue I could feel her shiver. Now, Janie, you do not suppose we are harboring a runaway, or anything like that?"

"Why, Judy, how foolish. You know Mrs. Weatherbee would not have agreed that father's scholarship be given Helen if she had not first carefully examined all her credentials. You know Mrs. Weatherbee and care. A regular text book. But I will admit, the child is afraid in public places. Much as I like it here, I should have been glad of a week in a big hotel just for the experience, if we could have induced her to go with us. It is a little queer, still Helen is lovely, don't you think so?"

"Too sweet for classification. Look at her now doing my chores," and Judith laughed. "Oh, Janie, dear, it is fun to be here, and to have your purse at the back of it. I never had so much spot cash in all my life as I have seen you flourish since we located at the Jordan apartment. It perfectly scares me."

CHAPTER X

FEARS AND FANCIES

"MADAM, dinner is served," announced Helen at the door, with the funny little jerked courtesy and her finger to her lips a la Molly in the movies. Helen was an apt American scholar, and her short stay in the country had already sufficed for picking up an attractive list of typical mannerisms. Especially did she show her aptitude in mimicing stage girls.

"Now, where did you learn that, Helen?" demanded Judith. "You never have seen me bite my index nail with that sort of charm."

"But you know I went to some plays in Warsaw, and we had American talent there," explained Helen. "I have not yet been to a theatre in America."

"Then you shall——"

"Oh, no, really, I do not wish——"

"Simpleton," kindly whispered Jane, pressing Helen's hand confidently, "we shall all go to a beautiful play, and you shall sit where no one can see you, if that is what you mean by declining all our theatre invitations. Since you really do not want to be seen in public, and perhaps you have a perfectly good reason for that choice, I must fix it so you shall see the public in private. It can be done, you know."

"Of coursey," chuckled Judith. "Trust Jane for that. She would call out the secret service, and we might all go in a regular presidential retinue, with the good-looking slim detectives at our heels."

"Monkey," Jane administered, "don't go putting such nonsense into Helen's curly head. No such thing, Helen. We may go to a theatre quite as privately as we went to the florists. Wait until you see how nicely I shall arrange it."

Helen evidently considered it would be rude for her to object, nevertheless it was clear to both girls she would have felt better to be allowed to decline Jane's ardent invitation. The fact that theatre parties had been taboo, on account of Helen's reticence, had given the Wellington las-

sies some annoyance. Jane and Judith both wanted to see good plays.

"Was the surprise something to eat, Janie?" asked Judith as they entered the dimly lighted dining room. One end of the long table had been taken over by one trio, while down the board in groups of twos, students and transients, were either partaking of or arranging their "individual" meals. Each girl did her own cooking and serving, unless she shared the task with a friend on the "co-op," this being short for co-operative plan.

"Well, we did fetch some choice tid-bits," Jane acknowledged, "and my paper bag broke, spilling the loveliest gooy-goo eclairs. Tim, the elevator boy, looked at me first fiercely, then as he scented the mix-up he smiled and——"

"Since then he has licked it up," contributed the irrepressible Judith. "I don't blame him. Yum—yum, Jane, you are a born housekeeper. You may have my next shift."

"Judith Stearns, if you attempt to duck your household responsibility once more we shall expel you. See if we don't. I have a mind right now to curtail your rations, and make you eat your pie without cheese."

"Spare me," pleaded Judith. "I might man-

age meat without spuds, but pie without cheese——"

Helen was enjoying the persiflage and serving her savory dishes at the same time. A well-balanced menu was the pride of Jane and her housekeeping. She had taken one course in domestic science, and the knowledge thus acquired she was trying on, as Judith put it.

"Think of home-made baked potatoes!" Jane exclaimed, as Helen untied the dainty little linen cover that hid the important vitamine dish.

"Oh, yes, and I will eat all the skin, Jane, so don't trouble to admonish me. I know the salts are in the skin, and I need the vitamines."

"What you need more than vits, Judy, are calories. You plainly need energy. As I recall the lesson, it says, an average person requires from two thousand three hundred, to three thousand five hundred calories daily. The lesser amount is given to desk workers, and the greater to the manuals, but as you are neither I should say you might need five thousand daily, then we might reasonably expect you to do your own K. P., all of which sounds like a Liberty Loan speech, doesn't it?"

"Janie Allen, since you are so expert, maybe you know that you require absolutely no carbo-

hydrates. You are too sweet for anything in that stunning flannel check. I have always known that gray and pink make a perfectly wonderful picture, when done on a background of a good sized check. Now your gray eyes, and your pink cheeks——"

"Fen, fen, no fair," begged Jane. "You are mixing your standards. This is a domestic science lesson. You may thank Helen for these goodies." Helen was proudly "serving" from a particularly savory casserole.

"Oh, indeed not. Jane chose the menu," Helen amended. "And our caterer knows us so well now, he always gives us the best."

"That's just the way, blessings brighten as they banish, and we are on our way to Wellington. But, Helen, I want to learn a few more Polish words. I am going to count them in on my foreign language list. I flunked in French, that is, I lost two points. Now what do you call meat in Polish?"

"Just meat is 'mieso,' but there are kinds of meat——"

"Oh, one kind will do me. And what is butter?"

"Butter is 'malso.'"

"And bread? I should have to have bread."

"Bread is 'chleb.' "

"Then here is my order in a foreign tongue—with personal service of course. That's the kind you get where they make the pancakes in windows," and Judith took her share of the casserole supply.

"I shall order this way: Donnez-moi sil vous plait, une morceau de chleb, une hunk of mieso, and one ball of malso. There, does not that embrace three perfectly good languages?" asked Judith.

Helen laughed merrily at Judith's absurd mixture. "It would be very funny if they served you that way. The flavors would be very mixed," she said archly.

"Yes, Judy, you would get an allied menu. Better, I think, to win each battle separately, and eat in each country as you go along. Personally, I have a weakness for 'grub and chow.' After that selection I make it civilized to the extent of three courses but never five. You see, we have three, Judy. You may have your dessert this time also."

Helen seemed preoccupied, and in spite of the chatter she stopped often and looked intently at Jane. Finally Judith, vanquishing the very last of her eclair, asked teasingly:

"What's on your mind, Helen dear? Met any more big men with long whiskers?"

Too late Jane's tug at Judith's skirt. Helen dropped knife and fork, and blinked to keep back tears.

"Now, Helen dear, I did not mean to make you feel badly. You know, I really like big, foreign-looking men, and I had no idea of ridiculing them," Judith sobered up instantly.

"Oh, it is not that, my friends, but I want to tell you so much. Sometimes I think, what do you think of me? Then again I say, I must try to make plain——"

"No, you must not, indeed," Jane assured her. "Don't worry your head about what we think, when you know it must be something very nice. We like you and you like us, so why should we go digging up old matters? When you want to tell us more about yourself we shall be very interested, but until you feel like it, we are perfectly content."

Helen's eyes still seemed about to overflow. Never had she looked so small and helpless, and she now displayed that attitude of diffidence, peculiar to foreigners. Years of oppression leave their indent upon such impressionable characters, and Helka Podonsky, at that moment harked

back, body and soul, to her untold life somewhere in Poland.

"Oh, thank you. I know how kind you are," she murmured. "But it must seem very strange. You know I love my people, and I love my country. It is not that—but——"

"Oh, we know, Helen dear," Judith tried to pacify. "And you must not think that because we are Americans, and have been born in these United States, we do not know of the hardships of other countries. And even here, Helen, we girls have plenty of troubles of our own, don't we, Janie?"

"Indeed we do. Last year was not so bad at school, but when I came to Wellington first I was treated exactly like an outcast, except for Judith's wonderful protection and influence. That is why you must trust us. We are determined you shall not suffer, as even a Western girl was made to. Why, if I had been a real cowboy, with all the trappings, they could not have been more hateful to me at first."

Tactful Jane had hit upon this line of conversation to relieve the more personal trend. But Helen did not quite understand. Was Jane warning her?

CHAPTER XI

A STRANGE PREDICAMENT

"OUR last expedition, girls. Shall we all make it?"

"Oh, don't tell us this is the wind-up of our glorious honeymoon! I feel exactly like a deserted bride. How can we leave it all for old Wellington, Jane?"

"Judy, dear, you forget the old saw about the fish that have not yet been caught. And I always thought you such a good sport."

"Janie, I know all that junk about fish. But just look at dear old New York! And see our applied science in exact housekeeping! I——"

"You were never exact, Judy. And I couldn't call that clump of wearables really scientific looking. In fact, I am worried about the expressmen coming in and grabbing up your train togs. Then you would have to go off in the flimsey you

wore to the play last night. I fancy it would rather be outre en route."

"Now, Janie, don't flash anything like that on me, at the moment, I love French in a nice rich translation like Hugo, but the naked truth in French rather frightens me. Make it English. You mean to say it would be outrageous for me to wear a theatre gown while travelling. There, I guessed it first shot. Give me one point."

"Seriously, Judith, the expressmen will be here this morning. You must realize they cannot carry things over their arms."

"Yes, I know. I have always thought it would be lots nicer if they did. It musses things up so to have to pack them. But since my innovation is not yet current, I suppose I shall have to spoil everything by cramming them in their awful little boxes. Jane, did you ever hear of a current innovation?"

"Can't recall that I have, dear. But I know what you mean. Helen, are you going with us on our very last shopping tour?"

Helen was folding up the precious garments so lately acquired. The fondness with which she smoothed them betrayed her delight in their acquisition. Helen had vehemently protested she did not need so many pretty things, but Jane

would have her fitted out as well, and perhaps a little better than most "freshies." Helen looked up with the eyes truly labeled violet, and like that wonderful flower, the depths of their color was softened to velvet by the least glint of dew.

"If you would not mind, Jane dear," she risked. "I feel I should like to have everything packed. And what more can we possibly buy?"

"All right, girlie. You may stay home and sigh, and kiss things up. I know you just hate to give up housekeeping, and I don't blame you in the least. We have had a lovely time," and Jane stopped to wind her arm around the curly head bent over the boxes on the floor. "You stay home if you wish, Helen, but don't scold me if I bring you one more—little handkerchief, or something like that?"

"Jane, I have wanted to tell you. I feel so over—over——"

"Helen, you mean overwhelmed, don't you?" suggested Judith.

"Yes, Judith, that is the big word I want. I feel—that way about everything. I had many pretty things once, but since I came to America I have been glad to be here, and not think of all I once loved."

Jane and Judith paused in their rushing about and listened attentively. Jane had been rather dreading this little speech from Helen.

"Yes, I have been so happy since I met you, and it seems we have been friends for always," went on the Polish girl. "But I want you to know I do not expect to be ever like this—a—guest. Some day I shall be able to repay."

"Now don't spoil everything by getting sad and gloomy," Jane admonished. "You know we just need you as much as you need us. Can't you see that?"

"I am very glad," and she brushed away something that blurred her big eyes. "I would like to do a great favor if ever I am the artist. I then will give—and give, and perhaps it will be a little, but never as much as this."

"You are engaged to play my wedding march, Helen," Jane declared, "and I shall expect you to do that for the sake of these old times." Jane was trying to make light of the threatening tragedy. "And besides that, you will surely have to play for Judith when she has her cowboy reunion. I believe she intends to engage the Hippodrome for that event."

"No place smaller, nor less substantial would answer my purpose," Judith agreed, annexing

Jane's humor. "I am going to show this New York some day, what the boys of El Capitan can do in the way of entertaining. Just you wait, Helen, until next vacation. We will take you out to Montana, and show you all the wonders I have enjoyed. I have forever blotted from my childish memory the thought of any other battleground, as a vacation scene. What I enjoyed on Jane's ranch is indelible."

"Come along, you chatter-box," urged Jane. "We must be back at least for the train. Good bye, Helen dear. Keep your door locked."

In spite of their years, with decorum annexed, the two girls were always strongly tempted to slide down those adorable banisters in Miss Jordan's big old-fashioned hall, and now, as they were going out for almost the last time, both girls eyed each other suspiciously.

"We don't dare, but it's a shame," spoke Jane. "That comes of getting old."

"Like a bald spot, it's the emptiness that hurts. Don't you feel a vagueness for a slide?" asked Judith, smoothing the glossy rail lovingly.

"Yes, but Judith, did you notice someone in the lower hall just as we left our room?" whispered Jane. "See that figure—gliding around the pedestal?"

"The plumber, likely," replied Judith. "I have seen that old coat before. Let's hurry, Janie, or, as you said, I shall have to give the expressmen my things 'As Is,' which means any old way, in store parlance. Where do we go from here?"

At the door Jane glanced back a little ruefully. She had seen some one—a man, surely, standing there, just as they came out of the big room at the top of the stairs, and possibly when he noticed they could observe him he disappeared in the direction of the heavy folding doors and the big bronze statue, that marked the entrance to the dining room.

"I wish Helen had come along," Jane remarked when on the sidewalk, "somehow I will be rather glad when we all get safely to Wellington."

"I have felt the same way these last few days," admitted Judith. "Jane, I think you are a wonder not to come right out, and ask Helen what all the mystery is about. Don't you feel a bit squeamish having her turn pale at old men's faces, and seeing her dodge every foreign-looking man, woman and child who comes along? Surely she is not too proud to be Polish."

"Oh, no, indeed. I know it is nothing like

class pride. She loves to watch the little children who congregate around hand organs and hurdy-gurdies, her eyes dance with them. No, Judith, Helen has a secret, and I am sure it is one that keeps her anxious, but why should I pry into it, just because she happened to win a scholarship? That would be poor sport, wouldn't it? To exact a price—the price of personal confidence from the winner? She won honestly and we are glad she did, so why speculate?"

"The Greeks still live," spoke Judith. "Jane, I believe if old friend Methuselah happened back for something he had forgotten, you would hand it out to him without asking the secret of his eight hundred years of life. Too personal for you. All righty. I shall agree, and I love the little curly-headed Helen. Also, I claim first round from the opposition when we start basket-ball and fight for Center. This is the sort of day that brings our game up even above the joy of seeing Marian Seaton die of envy. Did I tell you I had a letter from Visite? She is the French girl who came at the end of last season, you know, Adrienne's friend."

"Oh, yes, I recall, her name is Visitation and they call her Visite. She always wore such absurd high heels, didn't she?"

"That's Visite. But we will forgive her the heels for she speaks and writes perfect English. Some of the big girls, as she calls them, are having their cars sent out. I guess they did not like being overshadowed by your wonderful horse, Firefly. Not that a mere machine could compare with that glorious little animal."

"Oh, they may have their cars. I don't fancy motoring—yet. I may take to it when I get old and feeble. Here we are. I want to get a Tell-Tale for Katherine. Don't you think they are the dearest little books? And they always do tell tales, if we keep them written up. Let us look at these."

They inspected the dainty new dairies on the beautifully polished glass counter in Brientos. The new style diary had much to recommend it. The suggestions given in "Heads" left little to be worked out, by even such registrants as might be indolent. There were classified duties, pleasures, accidents, questions, engagements, expenses, apologies, dance steps, candy recipes, and such other incidents as might be particularly interesting to young girls. The lines were partly written, so that all the writer should fill out was the end of the line, like an insurance blank.

"Now, that is the way all our themes ought to be started for us," specified Jane. "If we had a starter line we could dash off a thesis with our eyes shut. I will take two of these. I am going to give one to Elaine. You know how she loves to write."

"Yes, I remember too well. She wrote a beautiful poem all over my closet door, and I had to stand for it," recalled Judith. "Better buy her a couple of reams of paper besides that sample. She needs space."

From the stationer's the girls pad ia last visit to their favorite confectioner. The amount of candy purchased seemed extravagant. Even the white-capped and ribbon-aproned clerk looked surprised when Judith called for the third box of cherries, but when the girls said good-bye, and Jane unpinned her own violets for this pretty little candy counter miss, the very delivery boy who swung out with the big white package, whistled good naturedly.

"Is that all?" asked Judith, glancing at her wrist watch anxiously.

"Almost. I want to get dad another box of cigars and Aunt Mary a bottle of sachet. I ordered her favorite scent and it will be ready now. They can be mailed direct from the stores."

Steps quickened, and cheeks glowing accordingly, Jane and Judith sped along. New York had been attractive, and the days just gone were filled with happy memories.

Finally, with lists all checked off, Miss Jordan's apartment was reached within ten minutes of the actual time set for return.

"I am sure Helen has everything ready," commented Jane, getting out her latch key.

"Trust her for that," Judith replied. "I hope she has been the good Samaritan to poor little me. Otherwise I see those armfuls and the staggering expressmen."

At the inside door, that opened into the girls' own apartment, Jane fumbled with her key. It would not open the door.

"Locked with the key in," Judith thought. "Call Helen!"

"Helen! Open the door!" called Jane. "Helen —are you there?"

No answer.

"She could not have gone out and left the key on the inside," Jane said, anxiously now. "I wonder what can be the matter."

"Let me shake the door," suggested Judith. "Queer——"

"Oh, is that you, girls?" called Miss Jordan

from the lower hall. "I have been trying to find someone to let me in there. The expressmen have been here, and I could not reach your trunks."

"But we left Helen in," Jane was trembling now. "She must be inside. Listen! Helen!"

A shuffling behind the panel could now be heard, then the key turned in the door, and Helen confronted them, pale and disheveled.

"Oh, child, whatever is the matter!" exclaimed Miss Jordan, brushing past the two girls and getting her motherly arms around the tottering Helen. "What ever has happened to you?"

"Oh, I—got—weak—I guess I fainted. I am all right now. I am so sorry——"

"Sorry!" exclaimed Jane. "Why, Helen dear, to think you were all alone. And had the door locked so Miss Jordan could not reach you! Sit down and let us get you some ammonia. Judith, it is on my stand. Please fetch it quickly."

No need to tell Judith to hurry, for the color of the little Polish girl's face was warning enough.

"Were you frightened of anything?" asked Miss Jordan, rubbing the trembling hands.

"But no one came in, did they, Helen?" asked Jane in real alarm.

"Oh, no, I—locked the door when I felt so queer. I thought perhaps it was the expressmen, but I could not attend——"

"You were very wise, my dear," and Miss Jordan shook her head thoughtfully. "It was better to be alone, although the experience was unpleasant. Those men might have picked up anything from this collection and then——"

"I am so sorry we left you alone," Judith murmured, with real penitence in her voice. "And to think we were gadding about, while you were ill and needed us so urgently. There, swallow that ammonia. It will soon revive you. I should hate to faint."

"Oh, I am again all right," and the pale face lightened up just a shade. "I am so much of a baby to get sick like that——"

"We will not leave New York until to-morrow if you do not feel perfectly all right," announced Jane with authority.

"Oh, but please, yes," begged Helen. "I am so glad to get to the big school. I like New York, but it is not like the college with all big grounds——"

"That is just what I say, Miss Allen," put in Miss Jordan as she smoothed the cushions they were piling around Helen. "You young ladies

have been having a great time, running around and feeding on electives, as we say at college when we choose our own studies. Are you sure you feel all right to travel, Helen?"

"Oh, yes, indeed. It was nothing. I was so happy—with all the new things that I forgot to eat my breakfast. I shall be all ready when the other girls are. And I am so grieved to give trouble." Helen was now quite herself again. The ammonia had done the work of restoring the temporarily impeded circulation. But Jane and Judith were not satisfied that all the story of her sudden illness had been told. It was decidedly strange that a girl should faint, right in her own room, and in the middle of the day. Still, both were too wise to press questions just then. The very best plan to be put in operation, they were deciding silently, was for all hands to be off to Wellington that very afternoon.

There was some bustling about, but Miss Jordan helped, and in spite of the confusion the baggage was finally shipped successfully and on time.

"Little old New York!" exclaimed Jane merrily, pressing her personal good bye on Miss Jordan. "You have been very good to the Wellington Refugees. And we thank you."

CHAPTER XII

WELLINGTON EN MASSE

"PRAY tell me, pretty maiden, are there any more at home like you?"

This came from the spreading oak, while from the group of young pines, in a remote corner of the campus the answer wafted in vigorous girlish voices:

"There are a few, and pretty too-to-too, to-oo-oo-oo."

It was the call to the incoming horde, on their first day at Wellington.

Over in the hollow, known as the Lair, another contingent from the upper classes called out, rather than sang:

"Sing a song of Freshies ready for the fray,
Open arms, oh, Wellington, and carry them away!"

A grand rush followed this challenge. The newcomers to Wellington, some timid, some brave, but all expectantly happy, were then borne away to the mysteries of college initiation—to the great world of advanced education. No hazing here, just the good-natured pranks dear to the heart of every college girl, and significant in the good fellowship established at the very outset of the broader school life. Came another shout:

"Get together, all together, keep together—wow! Every little Freshie must make a pretty bow!"

This was the signal for the real carrying off, for as the freshmen complied with the order "to bow" each was blindfolded, and carried off by a pair, or more, of strong arms, and quickly deposited in the gym.

With that dexterity for which such pranks are chiefly remarkable, the stunt was accomplished, to the sophs being assigned the task. The pledge of college sorority restricts the publication of the actual happenings in the sacred confines of the gym on this Initiation Day, but facts not on the program may be honorably recounted.

When Helen was ordered to sit down, she did

so with such unexpected alacrity that she sat on the college cat—Minerva by name.

No one regretted this accident more than did the cat. The howl from the girls, and the protests from Minerva fully substantiating this statement. But following this incident no one else could be induced to sit down. All feared cats, fiercer cats and bigger cats. As usual with the simple sitting down order a merry time followed. The blinded girls always feel they are in some unseen danger and refuse to be seated. Visions of cold lakes, high hills, soapy tubs, and even sequestered cats, seem to possess the aspirants. Of course, when they do unbend, they always find themselves sitting comfortably in a perfectly good seat. But Helen sat down with a bang, and this promptness won her first goal.

"She's a good sport!"

"A regular scout!"

"That's the sort of do-it-tive-ness!"

"Three cheers for Helen, Helena, Nellie and Nell!"

"All in favor of Nell shout!"

"Nell, Nell, ding, dong, ding!"

"She's with the Wellington's! Her hat's in the ring!" shouted, cheered and yelled the sororities.

Thus winning the first goal at initiation, Helen, thereafter to be known as Nell, found herself in unsought favor. The shouts and cheers of her new companions pleased none better than Jane Allen, although Jane had done nothing to provoke the sentiment. No one in Wellington knew, or would know, about the scholarship. When the announcement was made to schools in the spring, that such an opportunity was open to them, there was expressed keen interest, but in Wellington little or nothing was said or done to attract attention to the fact of a free scholarship. This was obviously good taste, as otherwise the winner would undoubtedly suffer social hardships.

As a prelude to other good times Train Day sports were carried on auspiciously. The fairness of putting the freshies "through" at once was apparent, as any delay, however trivial, served to develop for the newcomers—friends or enemies. Thus it was that the up-to-date plan of efficiency included these initial sports.

Also, it was better for the freshmen. They did not then have to go about for days fearing accidents, either planned or spontaneous. They were thus saved from the horror of fasting, fearing mustard or soap; they might now look on the lake without dreading a mysterious hand in

the ducking process, and they might go to bed without special precautions suggesting accidental insurance policies.

After a few simple stunts, such as singing in three foreign languages, answering ten questions truthfully and reciting Mother Goose from Tucker to Horner, the new students were considered qualified to take their places as freshmen.

The treat of the day was the Free Lunch Spread. This consisted of a typical lunch-wagon meal. In fact, the wagons, relics of the good old days when college raised its own supplies, had been fitted up, and from this portable delicatessen, coffee, rolls, hamburger and franks were distributed. Golden rod and iron weed, the gold and purple blending royally notwithstanding franks and hamburgers, were bunched at the oilcloth supports, and in the middle of each wagon covering, with a right artistic hole jaggedly punched, the "counter" could be both seen and heard from the outside.

"Oh, how glorious!" exclaimed Dorothy Ripple, otherwise known as Dick. "I never hoped to find college like this."

"And to get our first feed in the open without all the formalities of good manners," supplied Weasis Blair, who had, according to her own

statement put into cold storage her burdensome title "Marie Louise."

"Perfectly all right to be freshie to-day," commented Grazia St. Clair (she pronounced her name like "Grawcia"). It might have been Latin-Italian, and did not seem to euphonize with the British St. Clair. However, Grazia was a very attractive girl. She had hair that curled up and down, hiding the fact that it was bobbed, and she looked out of a pair of the most wonderful topaz eyes! Everyone loved Grazia at sight. She, Weasie and Dick, formed a combine immediately, and a happier little trio of freshmen could not be found on the campus. All over the spacious grounds girls flitted to and fro, winding in and out of the autumn sunshine in the very best of their late summer glorious gowns. It was a patch of summer weather always welcome to school girls, who are loath to give up pretty togs without affording school friends an opportunity of getting a glimpse of them. The voiles, from green of the daintiest, to geranium of the gayest, blazed everywhere in a riot of tropical warmth and splendor.

Jane and Judith were very busy. As juniors they carried considerable responsibility of the day's function, and to Jane, Right Guard of

soph year, descended the special honor of playing hostess to the sophs and freshmen.

"I like our new plan immensely," Judith declared to Jane as the latter gathered up cups and saucers, and rescued spoons from leafy graves. "What a wonderful class!"

Helen sidled up to the big rustic bench from which Jane was frantically trying to gather up all kinds of paper dishes and incorrigible china.

"Oh, Jane dear," she exclaimed, "isn't it beautiful!"

"Do you like it, Nell?" asked Jane, caressing the little word "Nell" with a ring like the old-time pretty little song, "Nellie Was a Lady."

"Oh, I adore it!" enthused Helen. "And I like the American Nell. It has a tone like the bell," and she tossed her curly head in rhythmatic sway of a silent, human song.

"We shall have to call you the girl of many names," Jane said with a bright smile. "But what is movable is curable, we say in English, so perhaps some day you will have a name so famous——"

"Oh, la, la, la!" and Helen ran off to the beckoning throng of freshmen, which included Dick and Weasie. She had thus acquired more freedom in a few hours on the campus than many

would have gained in days, under more formal circumstances.

Small wonder seniors commented favorably on the "Jane Allen Plan," as the new arrangements had been styled. That Jane had suffered tortures on her own initiation no one guessed, but that she was instrumental in saving others embarrassment was too obvious to disregard. As was expected, many of the old class failed to return. The close of the World's War had spent its baneful influence on many homes, where happy school girls were suddenly thrust into premature womanhood, and where girls, hitherto closely guarded from the most trivial hardship, now occupied the boys' places, and willingly offered sturdy young arms to prop crushed parents under the blows dealt by Humanizing Fate.

But Marian Seaton—she whom Jane and Judith and their faction, had struggled so valiantly to subdue—she was back—like the proverbial bad penny.

Her hair was no longer any relation to yellow, but glowed a rich golden brown like early chestnuts. How do the heads stand the changes! And her white skin, pale to the edge of chemistry, was now pale in spots and tinted in detail. Her deep uncertain eyes, now blue and then yellow,

movie eyes, as Meta Noon called them, were surely changing tone. Every experimenter knows hair dye afflicts the blood in color changes, affecting the eyes disastrously. Also, but it seems unkind to suggest such a catastrophe, hair-dye has an immediate action on the sight. Cicily Weldon could not tell time last year after one trip to New York when her hair was "fixed up!"

"Oh, how do you do, Jane?" lisped the same Marian, coming up the path as Jane was hurrying down. "Wasn't it perfectly wonderful?"

"Delightful," replied Jane with a show of good nature she intended to make infectious. "Did you have a pleasant summer?"

"Yes, and no. I was on at Camp Hillton helping mamma with some war work left unfinished. I met some lovely non-coms."

"Oh, at Camp Hillton! Only the sick are there, are they not?"

"Not all really very sick," replied Marian. "Some are merely ailing. But of course, they had been wounded," she felt patriotically obliged to qualify.

"Poor fellows," sighed Jane.

"Awfully jolly chaps," replied Marian.

Even at this early date Jane and Marian disagreed—and about wounded soldiers!

"Dazzling little foreigner our—Nellie," too sweetly remarked Marian. "Hasn't she the loveliest accent?"

"Do you think so?" almost gasped Jane. There! In spite of all precautions that word "foreigner." What was there so perfectly fiendish about Marian Seaton? Why should she always sing out the falsetto?

"Oh, yes, I was wondering what was her province?" she persisted.

But Jane was now hurrying down the path, scattering recalcitrant dishes as she went.

Plague that old Marian Seaton and her sneers!

"Oh, hello, Janie," called out Dozia Dalton, otherwise Theodosia. "How's the Wild and Wooly?"

"Almost ready to shear," replied Jane, in as jovial a tone as Dozia had betrayed. "There are whiskers on the moon, and the sun has a pompadour. How's little Beantown?"

"Browning nicely, thank you!" in an invisable pun. "I had a pan just before I left."

Good old Dozia, always ready for a lark. No doubt she did have what might be taken for a "panning" previous to leaving home if she perpetrated any of her famous jokes physically. Dozia was regarded "an awful joker" and she

usually preferred the illustrated brand of funnies.

"Welcome to our city," yelled Minette Brocton. "Someone said you had made your debut—saw you in New York."

"Oh, hello, Nettie," called back Jane. She liked Minette, and wondered if she had seen the "housekeepers" while that squad was on duty in New York.

"What are squashes fetching to-day? And have you any very nice La France onions?" asked Minette in a tone full of good humor. "I wonder, Jane, you did not buy a pushcart."

"Oh, Nettie Brocton! Don't you dare tell me you saw us in New York and never came to see us," reproached Jane.

"Couldn't find you. All I could ever see distinctly were brown paper bundles."

"Oh, Nettie, really, did you see me in New York?" Jane was coaxing now.

"No, but a friend of mine did. There now, not one more scrap of information will I give you. But I love your little friend Nellie."

"I am so glad, Nettie. We need you in our ranks. Spread the call for team play. This will surely be an eventful year."

CHAPTER XIII

STIRRING THE DEPTHS

"SHE won't run!"

"Of course she will. Who asked her?"

"I didn't ask her, but I heard her say emphatically that she would not. And you know Jane Allen."

"But we must have her. And we have to get very busy before the freshmen have a chance to go over our heads. I have been lobbying ever since the four thirty, and I have seen all the old girls, and lots of new ones. This is so important, Gloria. You know what a big year we have planned."

"Yes, Judy, I do know. All the more reason why we should have Jane. But she can't or won't forget her freshman experience. She declared it showed a prejudice that would react on the club if we chose her. That is why she refuses."

Gloria Gude and Judith Stearns were in conclave. It was the day before class election and not a single head could be seen anywhere either in or out of college. They ran in pairs, and from that up to tens but no singles. Everyone was scouting and rooting secretly for her candidate, and not a few sashes were inadvertently exchanged in the wild pulls and grabs, desperately made to get votes that might be passing by in chapel or through recitation halls. Dozia Dalton had thus acquired Molly Linott's black velvet long ding-dong belt, and Nettie Brocton lost her embroidered Chinese ribbon somewhere going from two ten, to three fifteen.

"If I get any more souvenirs I shall have to have an auction," Judith remarked, to Gloria. "Someone just pegged a perfectly good powder puff at me to get my attention. Now, who uses that scent?"

"Oh, Judy, let's be serious. What shall we do if Jane will not run?"

"Take her," declared Judith, practical for once.

"But how?"

"That is for us to decide. We are the executive committee. Let's get under cover."

The brisk October morning pinched their

cheeks giving glow but not imparting warmth. It was chilly even for college girls—quite cold for mere folks.

"Come over to the wigwam. There we can talk unmolested, as Cleo would say. We must make her editor this year, by the way," digressed Gloria.

"One thing at a time, especially one election. Now, whom have you seen? Who will lead the Maths?" Judith checked up.

"Tim Maher. You know she is a dandy. She not only leads but lines 'em up. She won't let a single vote get loose."

"Yes, Timmy is dependable. But I thought the Seatons rather copped her late last season? She went a little with Mazie."

"Oh, yes, but even Mazie is with us now. Marian Seaton has lost a lot of friends. I think I know why."

"Could I know? It might help with the election."

"Well, Judy, it is very personal. Haven't you noticed Marian is wearing some of last year's things?"

"No, I hadn't. But they surely have scads of money."

"Oh, yes, but Marian has a very determined

father, I believe. However, it is not anything we should feel like injecting into our politics. Jane would never stand for home stuff getting into class work."

"Oh, no, I had no idea of suggesting it," replied the rather aggrieved Judith. "I have some honor myself, Gloria."

"Don't get mad, Judy. I know you are all wool and a yard wide, or you will be after this year's series. But let us keep at the subject. Whom have we for the second division?"

"Suppose we try Janet Clark?"

"Oh, she's too fly-away and pretty. Likely that's her powder puff that came kiting. How about Ted Guthrie?"

"If she isn't too fat to get around, Ted is all right. But have you observed her circumference? Must have spent her summer at a pure food show. Well, say we try Ted Guthrie," and the pencil scrawled over the half sheet of notebook paper.

"Oh, there's Nettie Brocton. Let's call her and ask about the Triangles. Oh, Nettie! Whoo! Whoo!"

Answering the owl call, Nettie ran across the campus, jumping nimbly over the hedge balls that marked the places where girls were not supposed

to tread. But the reckless late fall weather cancelled such orders automatically.

"Nettie, do you know about the Triangles? How are they lining up? For Jane?"

"Oh, I am so disappointed," and the pretty face submerged its dimples. "Someone has been telling about the college the most absurd story about Jane."

"Story about Jane!" both girls exclaimed, indignantly.

"Yes, too ridiculous. Said she has adopted a girl, actually adopted a girl, who is at this college. And that she has brought her here just to wait on her. Did you ever hear such trash?"

A light filtered through Judith's mental reservation. That story must mean Helen. And the "adoption" must belong to the scholarship clause. How awful it seemed to struggle against class prejudice! Why must some girls always be snobs?

"Who would have spread such a crazy yarn?" asked Gloria.

"Well, someone who shopped in New York late this summer, I guess. Said she saw Jane lots of times, and the little girl carrying her bundles."

Judith's face fell to zero. After all they had

done for Helen, to think the tables had been turned, making Jane the beneficiary!

"We have to come right out and contradict that," exclaimed Gloria. "We could never win with Jane wearing the stigma of—snob."

"And Jane Allen above all girls! She who has always been so generous and so considerate. Why, I would as soon think of accusing her of theft, or any crime outright, as to say she would bring a girl here under false pretenses."

None knew better than did Judith how delicate a situation was evolving. To clear Jane would implicate Helen to the extent, at least, of proclaiming her a scholarship student, and this would be an outrage, just when she was becoming so popular, and when news from her friends—but Judith could no longer cogitate. She must act! She must do something to save the situation.

"I was with Jane and Helen in New York, and we stopped at Miss Jordan's. We all had a wonderful time. Now how could anyone make bad capital out of that?" she demanded of the defenseless and innocent Gloria.

"Well, you know the opposition," Gloria reminded the indignant Judith. "They are all wizards at that sort of thing. There goes the

gong. We must away. Nettie, don't do anything till you hear from us. Be at the palms when three thirty is dismissed," and with a well-practiced dash all three covered the stretch of green and presently sauntered in line with their classes, quite as calm and unruffled as the remainder appeared. All but Judith. Those who knew her best might easily have guessed she was "boiling over." That determined, self-restrained expression could mean nothing else.

"What on earth is it, Judy?" whispered Jane.

"Turned on my ankle," glibly lied Judith, without any such intention.

"Hurt much?" persisted the troublesome Jane.

"No, that is—yes. I don't know—maybe nothing," and Judith blushed at her own stupidity. Presently Jane would be suggesting iodine. Breathing exercises over, just as Judith had feared, along came Jane with her whisper:

"Iodine!"

"Oh, yes, war paint!" Judith flung back. "I am all right, Janie, I was joking."

A look of relief was so apparent on Jane's pretty face that Judith was chagrined. But Judith knew too well if she did not put an end to the joke at once, and that decidedly, Jane would likely be insisting upon doing the rubbing for

that ankle. Maybe between periods. Jane was like that with her sympathy, practical.

Class in session all eyes seemed focussed in the direction of the "Two Jays" as Jane and Judith were dubbed. Jane was quite as determined as her opponents that she would not run for class presidency, and Judith was just as positive as both factions that Jane would run and also that she would win. Little Judy Stearns, as she was telling herself, must have some sense, and she would get right to operating it that very afternoon. But how help Jane without hurting Helen?

The day's work seemed interminable. Everything dragged but worry, and that leapt.

In a retrospective interval the memory of the queer fainting spell Helen suffered, just before leaving New York, came to Judith with positive relevance. What if that had been caused by someone frightening Helen, and if that someone had sent all that hateful story to Wellington?

Obviously Helen would never have told them if such a thing had happened. Would she admit it now?

That the Polish girl was seriously afraid of some haunting terror Judith knew instinctively, and it was certain any additional cause for worry

would be equivalent to the proverbial last straw. No telling what might occur if Helen ever guessed she was the innocent cause of trouble for Jane.

When class was finally dismissed Judith avoided Jane and sought out her "chiefs." A real round-up of the voting situation must be made with all possible celerity, and Judith knew it would be no easy matter to rally her scattering forces, in the face of the delicious gossip that was slowly but surely filtering through the groups to the detriment of Jane's reputation.

Minette Brocton was waiting at the palms. She pinched Judith's hands confidently as the two fell into step for recreation.

"I think I can trace the story, Judy," she said in a hushed voice. "And whether Jane runs or not, we must bury the corpse, or better still, cremate it. But how about little Nell? She seems supersensitive."

"She is exactly that. But don't you think all —strangers are apt to be?" Judith was on the point of saying "foreigners," when she caught herself.

"Yes, I have always noticed that," Minette replied. "But I overheard something at luncheon that gave me a clue. Did you ever meet a

boy, a sort of foreigner while you were in New York?"

"A boy—a foreigner!" Judith searched her memory. "Of course we likely met many such. You don't mean call boys, bell boys, or check boys, do you?'

"Oh, no, certainly not. I knew you met battalions of them. I mean some one who called on —Helen?"

"Oh, mercy no!" Judith almost gasped. "Helen would not see anyone. She acted like a frightened little mouse."

"Then did she get many—letters?"

"Never one that I saw," promptly replied the surprised Judith.

"Well, it is something about a boy, and a letter, and of course he had to be foreign to match up. But I know it is all plain rubbish. And I will do all in my power to run it down. Meanwhile we have to have an election," and the soft brown eyes looked wistfully into Judith's darker orbs.

"Worse luck," replied Judith. "But since we must have it, we must elect our candidate. I never felt quite so helpless. It is plain I do depend a lot on Janie."

"We all do, but this is an excellent opportun-

ity to try out our own mettle. If I could only come right out and ask——"

"Whom?" insisted Judith with much vehemence.

"Marian Seaton, of course."

"Then, why not!"

"Because I have no defence prepared. I would not know what to say to offset her accusations. You know how horribly sneering and insinuating she is, if she would only say something intelligent one might reply, but she just smirks, and sneers, and curls those painted lips."

"Oh, easy, Nettie, don't slam Marian. She is real, at corners, you know, even if the corners are anything but square, still I am willing to admit Marian is insidious," Judith qualified.

"The smirking snob," Minette declared, losing her temper. "I have no patience with a girl in the juniors who acts like a freshling cad. It isn't as if she had not already had the benefit of two hard years' training."

"And enough hard knocks to make the training effective," corroborated Judith. "I know all that, Nettie. But it is just the peculiar situation. Difficult problems require skilful handling, and this is a hard knot. I may as well tell you, Nettie, something about the whole thing, so we will

be able to work intelligently," Judith suddenly decided.

"Seems to me every one is holding conference with every one else," remarked Minette, seeking out a safe place in which to continue their talk. "I wonder how they will ever get together for the line up?"

"I have tried to take care of that for our party," Judith answered. "We have arranged to meet directly after supper on the South Slope. When we call the roll and give the handshake, we will know if we have any spies among us. Then, when all is fixed, we will take the hall by storm and put our ticket through before the freshmen know what is going on. Of course, they may have a plan better than ours and may swamp us," Judith finished, a little dubiously.

"Oh, there is Jane! She is looking for us. What shall we do now? We can never plan with her listening," exclaimed Minette, regretfully.

"Got to postpone it a little," Judith said hurriedly. "Hello, Janie. What's the war cry?"

"Judy, dear, I hate to be so emphatic, but I really can't let you go on with this electioneering for me. I will not run." Jane struck a rigid

pose and spoke with unmistakable emphasis.

"But why?" gasped Minette, before Judith could speak.

"It is too long a story to tell in a moment," Jane replied very seriously, "but you must believe me, when I say, I cannot run."

Judith bit her red lips until her wonderful teeth threatened to take root outside of their limits. She was saying yes, just as emphatically as Jane was saying no. The two heads were all but wagging, and each wigwagged a very different meaning.

"You still feel all that old stuff about being a Westerner and having had squabbles during your fresh year," blurted Judith. "You know, perfectly well, Jane Allen, all the whole college admires you, and you won't let us have our way. Now, do you call that fair play?"

"Well, Judith, I have to think of—other things. You may imagine every one likes me, but I have a perfectly good pair of working ears and I have not wadded them up for the last few days. From what I have unwillingly heard, I can judge of what I didn't hear," and Jane smiled that old-time determined Allen smile, the pride of her father. Could he have seen her now he would have openly rejoiced. Jane assumed

a distinctive attitude. It proclaimed "No Compromise."

"Perhaps, if I skip along, you two may fight it out in comfort," suggested Minette. "I'll away—and—see—some—folks," she finished enigmatically. But Judith had the interpretive key.

CHAPTER XIV

BAFFLING STRATEGY

"SHH! Ssh! Careful!"

"Keep back, Ted. They'll see your feet!"

"No bigger than yours!"

"Hush there, you two rowdies. Do you want to have us all captured?"

"Larry is pinching me!"

"Never saw such babies. We will run you all home, if you don't behave. I wish I had the other line to lead. They would—obey."

"Hush, kids. We'll be expelled. But isn't it too funny?"

"Might be for you, but I'm choked. If I don't get this mask off soon I'll collapse and you'll have a real funeral."

Titters and gasps, muffled giggles and escaping "S-sish!" like a steam valve leaking noise,

the sophs and their co-workers among the freshmen were crowding around Oak Hall for the all-absorbing election. As usual on this occasion the freshies were in a panic of fun. They knew nothing of the agony of being captured by the juniors, and the masked line with the perfect disguise of gym uniform, and the head winders, found more ways of giving expression to forbidden mirth than even their giggling reputation credited them with. "The Babes," ever fractious, were simply exasperating to-night, and Judith, with her scouts, more than once threatened to drive them home to bed at the very next whimper.

Directly back of Oak Hall the plotters plotted. They were to assemble there, rush into the hall at a given signal, and put the election over before the other contingent gained their bearings.

"All counted?" whispered Judith.

"Yes," replied Dozia Dalton, "and some to spare."

"Sure they're ours?" cautioned Judith again.

"They had the grip," replied Dozia.

"And the pass word?"

"I didn't try it."

"We have to—spies could defeat us."

"All right. Wait," and the fearless Dozia crept through the line of masked figures until

she reached number forty-eight. Here she halted.

"Grip?" she whispered, and the figure gripped.

"Password?" she ordered again, but no word came.

"Give the password," she hissed into the ear—this time very distinctly. But only a mumble came from the now shifting mask.

"Step out!" ordered Dozia, and the girl in place "forty-eight" instantly ducked the line and ran toward the lake, Dozia close at her heels.

"You may as well stop!" called the soph. "We will get you if we have to put off this election to do it."

But the figure only yanked its bloomers higher above knees, giving more freedom for action, and clearing every sort of woody obstacle, dashed on. Dozia gave a muffled "Coo-ee." She required help to overtake the spy. And the chimes were striking seven—the hour of attack! A runner known by her stout stick and shorter skirt answered the coo-ee call immediately. When within hearing Dozia ordered:

"Go ahead! Don't mind me! I will take care of Forty-Eight," and back to the now moving line the runner made her way to relay Dozia's answer.

"Now!" signalled Judith. "One, two, three! Go!"

The rush that followed this order did full credit to the wild occasion. Scrambling, pushing, urging, shoving, all fighting to gain entrance to Oak Hall, and there to hold the fort against the opposition, the mass of determined girls forced their way on.

Those who actually fell by the wayside were automatically picked up, and carried on with the tide, so that once the hall was reached it took but a few seconds to surround the ballot boxes, secure the official blackboard, and begin the election before the other side had recovered from its shock of surprise, caused by the commotion.

Judith was chairman of candidates. It was her duty to report on nominations. Edith Lee and Minette Brockton were clerks of election; Dorothy Blyden and Grazia St Clair, inspectors. Judith jumped to the platform over the foot lights (unlighted to-night) and reached the rostrum without the slightest hint of formality. Forthwith she shouted:

"We are here to elect the class president for '20. We have a candidate unanimously chosen. I shall give the name to the clerk."

She then passed to Edith Lee a slip of paper. From this Edith promptly read:

"Jane Allen, '20."

There was a roar of applause, and then followed a mumble of objection. The applause attempted to drown the call for an opportunity to be heard.

"Madam Chairman! Madam Chairman! Mrs. Chair! The chair! Hear! Hear!"

"Prepare your ballots!" came the order from the chair, ignoring the call from the floor.

There was no need to give this last call, for scarcely Judith uttered the word "prepare" than the girls, all primed for the cue, made another rush for the ballot box.

By this time the other side had "gained consciousness," as Minette expressed it, and were massing to form a blockade. To reach the ballot box, deposit the votes every one of which was correctly signed, then to seize the box, count the votes and announce the winner would constitute a legal election. And some work!

In spite of the scramble and seeming disorder, every turn of the proceeding was carried out according to parliamentary rules—all but one detail: the candidate had not accepted the nomination.

"Where is she? Where is Jane Allen? Jane, dig in!" came shout after shout, as the girls pressed their way to the little box, therein to deposit the fateful slip of yellow paper. But Jane did not appear.

Nevertheless the voting went on, wildly, madly.

Groups of the opposition surrounded groups of the less experienced girls—those among the freshmen, but captives were quickly released by the forceful breaking in of the sophs. The call for Jane grew wilder and more persistent.

"Is she hiding?" someone asked.

"Jane Allen hide!" came back the indignant denial. "You don't know your candidate."

"Where is she? Produce her, or we shall challenge the election!" This last threat came from the gallery, and was known to have been uttered in a faculty voice. Now Jane must really be produced.

"Quick! Get the boxes. They are all in," gasped the panting Judith. "Jump into the side room and get counting before the others can line up, and we will go for Jane. We will not come back without her."

"Fraud! Fraud! Stuffed boxes! Unparliamentary! Against the rules! Where's your candidate?" came the repeated and reiterated shouts

until even the lustiest among them cracked her voice and fell back on groans.

"They can't do it," insisted a cry for the opposition.

"Yes, we can. We will have our candidate here on time to accept," came back the equally determined rejoinder.

"Clear the floor. Balloting is over for the count. Poles closed! Time's up, clear the floor for counting!" came the well-known official voice from the gallery.

"Shame! Outrage! Fraud!" muttered the vanquished horde, but Judith and Grazia were scouring for Jane.

Without the presence of the candidate she could not be legally elected.

But where on earth was the invisible and elusive Jane!

CHAPTER XV

ELECTION NIGHT

BUT she is not in her room. I went there just before the Pow-Wow."

"She may have come back. Where else could she be?"

"Do you suppose?"

"No, I don't. Jane would stand by her guns to the last ditch."

"Yet, she was so determined not to run. Perhaps, after all, we were foolish to force it on her."

"No, I just weighed up all the standards, and decided we had to have her for the good of this year's work all round. And then I knew, if we could convince her of that, she would not desert us. I know Jane will come through."

Judith and Grazia were punctuating their flight with such broken sentences as the above. They had not yet discovered the whereabouts of

their candidate, and there were precious few moments left to accomplish that important task without which success, their election would promptly be declared null and void.

"Now, let us draw our breath, and incidentally our common sense," advised Judith, coming to a sudden halt. "If she is not in her room, I know she is not in college; if she is not in college then where is she?" reasoned the much perplexed young lady.

"Let's ask Molly. She was brushing up the halls when supper room let loose." This seemed an opportune suggestion from Grazia.

"Yes, there was a telephone, girls, and yes, it was for Miss Allen and yes, I saw her go out." Molly did not wait long enough to be cross examined.

"Which way? Did she walk? Did you hear her answer the phone?" Molly with her dustpan and broom was further besieged.

From the meager information thus obtained it was plain Jane had left the grounds.

Despair, thick and black, settled over the erstwhile politicians.

"But she could soon be back," offered the sympathetic Molly. "Hark! There's a car now."

The door opened slightly, and the portal

framed a figure in blue! With a wild rush the committee of two dashed to the door.

"Jane! Jane Allen!" called both, verifying their suspicion with a tug at the now shrinking Jane.

"You are elected!" predicted Judith. "Come right along, and accept. Resign later if you must, but accept now or we are lost."

"One moment——" panted Jane. It was evident she had been experiencing some trouble. She was flushed and excited.

"We haven't the moment," insisted Judith. "They are waiting for us with the votes held up. Come on, Jane. Be a sport!" and like two young giants the hitherto ordinary girls assumed the role of baggage men and picked up Jane bodily, carrying her off to the expectant election room.

"Clear the way! She comes! Lo! The conquering hero comes!" shouted the crowd at the first glimpse of the triumphant entry.

"Are you ready for the question?" called the election clerk, taking up her delayed cue with alacrity.

"Question!" went up a shout.

"The result of the ballot is the unanimous election of Jane Allen, president of Class 1920!"

Wild cheers completely submerged Oak Hall

charging the atmosphere like a veritable tidal wave.

The first great rush and roar over, the still billowing tide surged and splashed into the inevitable class yell:

"I know a girl and her name is Jane,
A reebald, ribald rowdy;
The second verse is just the same,
A reebald, ribald rowdy!"

Thus, the improvised class yell, went on one verse after another all being ended "Just the same" until throats gave out and feet merely pounded, or patted, and kept the echoing time. Finally Jane was accorded an opportunity of making herself heard, although it was rather a meager opportunity, and uncertain in spots. She had just risen to her feet when a cry from the "left wing" got the floor.

"We challenge this election!" shouted the opposition, led by Lillian Summers. "The candidate never accepted."

"She is here to accept," fired back Judith as spokesman for the right.

"I accept the candidacy," promptly called Jane, to the intense delight and utter surprise

of her strongest advocates. She had declared all along she would not run. Even Judith was now thoroughly astounded.

"Hurrah, hurray! horroo!" rang out the call. Then the unquenchable:

"A rebald, ribald rowdy!
The hundredth verse is just the same——"

Judith pounded for order and after a few "flare-ups" had been extinguished, she, as spokesman, went on with the proceedings.

All this time Judith and her followers were at a loss to account for Marian Seaton. It was just like her to go off in comfort and expect her abject contingent to do her troublesome bidding, and certainly, no one could mistake the hand that ran the opposition; yet in spite of that argument Marian might reasonably be expected to lend a hand through the unexpected difficulty, and, at least, give the ship a push to start it out on the troubled waters. But no Marian was either seen or heard.

Once more gaining what substituted for quiet Judith took the floor. She was surprising herself with the newly acquired efficiency she so deliberately demonstrated.

"We are fully prepared to submit to our of-

ficials all the records of these proceedings, which have resulted in the election of Jane Allen class president," she proclaimed without a pause. "We can show that every vote is properly signed, and that the report of the nominating committee, and the acceptance of the candidate, complied with the time rules. Our clerks will be happy to meet the faculty, at any time named by that honorable body, and then and there produce the proofs of our sincerity and obedience to the honorable rules of our beloved Wellington."

"Three cheers for our leader, Judith Stearns!" were then called for and responded to with such ructious vehemence, as might have been expected had the criers and cheer squad been turned loose at that moment. A full half hour of the most strenuous kind of shouts and cheers had little effect on dampening voices and ardour, when the call to cheer Judith sounded anew.

Judith waved for silence in vain. Not in years had there been such a remarkable manifestation at an election. Just once Judith caught the glittering eye of Helen, who was down front with her contingent. It had been carefully arranged that she should keep away from Judith and Jane, to dispel suspicion regarding their actual relationship, but that the little artist had worked for the

result now being proclaimed to honor Jane, none knew better than the new class president herself.

"Speech! Speech!" shouted the cheering squad. Then Jane stepped forward.

"This honor," she said, "I have not sought, but I am none the less grateful. Why I have changed my mind from a positive declaration against accepting to the position I now hold, is a matter—too complicated for platform utterance. I feel, however, in justice to my supporters, they should know, if they care to, the exact particulars. Therefore, we will arrange a time for a private conference of the leaders, as quickly as that time can be set apart. In the meantime be assured of my gratitude, and my determination to support the traditions of Wellington."

"Cheers! Cheers!" demanded the shouting squad, and answering the call came that unintelligible faulty rhyme:

"I know a girl and her name is Jane,
A reebald, ribald rowdy!
The hundredth verse is just the same
A reebald, ribald rowdy!
Janey, get a rat-trap bigger than a cat-trap!
Reebald, ribald! Siss-boom-bah!
Wellington! Wellington! Rah! Rah!"

"I never thought we could do it," Drusilla Landers hissed into Jane's ear, as they filed out, at the same time giving her hand a congratulatory squeeze. "You have no idea how the opposition worked. We won by strategy—nothing else. They had us beaten in point of numbers two to one. But they never got a chance to poll a vote."

"Nor to candy a candidate," assisted Jane, with a school girl's delightful disregard of common sense English.

"But they will make us pay for our victory," forecast the sage Drusilla.

"We put it over this time, and we have right on our side," orated Jane. "No need to climb the steeple until the flagpole sags."

"Oh, our colors are flaunting to-night!" Drusilla made Jane hear, her eyes sparkling with well-earned satisfaction.

"Ummmm!" Jane reciprocated the long "M" like a whisper through the pines, serving to express more with its hum, than might have a whole paragraph of mere ordinary cut out words.

In the day's records no mention is made of the lecture. But it was delivered, and the class attended, so the "condition" was met, if not entirely appreciated. Sleep itself had to fight for its honors on that night in Wellington.

CHAPTER XVI

POLITICS ET AI

"OH, I am too excited for words!" exclaimed Clare Bradley. "Have you heard the news?"

"I may have," replied Judith, with her old-time drollery. "What particularly choice crumb have you reference to, Clare?"

"Oh, Marion Seaton is perfectly wild. Threatens to leave college if we are not all disciplined. She won't even come to her classes. Judy, dear, do you think we—will catch it?"

She was a dear little freshman, and while she loved the fun of real trouble, especially when some one other than herself was more seriously involved, she did have a little fear of reported college pranks reaching the ears of her ministerial father. He was a good sort (not sport) himself —was Rev. Clarence Bradley, and he had experi-

enced his own college fun, no doubt; but Claire promised, on leaving home, she would never bring disgrace to his curly blond head, with any "bad reports" from school, and the pretty little black-eyed, light curly-haired girl fervently hoped to keep her promise.

"I am not a bit afraid of Marian's threats," answered Judith boldly. "In fact, I rather think she will be the one to call halt, when we ask for a report of the doings of election night. Marian is not living in a stone house. I fancy there are lots of windows in it, if it is not entirely made of glass, to speak metaphorically."

"And another thing, a lot of the girls are turning against Helen," went on the communicative Clare. "They say she—is—a free scholar."

"Free scholar!" Judith repeated. "Where have I heard that term before? Oh, yes, it was Poor Scholar in some old book. But free scholar is entirely new. How could one get into Wellington free, may I ask? Have you heard, Clare?"

"Oh, you know what I mean. They say she is a scholarship girl and that Jane has adopted her. But you know all that nonsnese was exploded before the election," Clare made haste to add, as she noted the black frown steal over Judith's face.

"Yes, it was, Clare, and I don't think it ought

to be resurrected again," said Judith, with a show of severity. "However, we will have a pow-wow to-night in the big study room. We got permission to use it to finish up our election work, and if any one wants to ask questions they may do so there. Good bye, Clare, and be sure to come to the pow-wow," and with a reassuring smile Judith glided away to meet Jane and Helen who were on a bench near the lake.

"Rumors, always rumors," Judith told herself, "but I must keep them from Jane and Helen, if possible. I suppose, as Drusilla said, we will have to pay for our victory."

"Oh, hello, Judy Stearns!" called Jane before the girl with the shifting frown came within talking earshot. "How do you do! I had been planning to send you a wire, or a special, or some sort of message to find out if you were still at Wellington. I scarcely ever see you. Of course, when you are due to sleep you may come in, but by that time I am unconscious. How is the brave warrior?" and Jane swung her free arm around her chum.

"I, too, thought our Judy was escaped," said Helen. "I have so seldom seen her—pretty face."

"It is well worth while to make one's self scarce

when it inspires such sentiments," said Judith. "I am very well, thank you, and just help yourself to yeses, for any of the other questions. Jane, you look wonderful, after your practice. Did they threaten to expel me for not being on hand?"

"Where were you? I was afraid we would lose our end without our trusty forward."

"I fully expected to get to the gym in time, Jane, but I was detained," she finished with a comical twist of the last word showing how utterly meaningless it was intended to be.

"Oh!" said Jane, displaying a similar lack of intelligence.

"But it was very wonderful," contributed Helen, her deep blue eyes (tabulated as violet) fairly melting into a sweetness that made itself felt with returned affection by her friends. "Jane —was—the star."

"Mercy, friends, mercy!" exclaimed Jane, in mock alarm. "If I receive any more compliments I shall expect to go up in smoke. It 'ain't natural nor human,' as old Uncle Todd would say," and she slipped down in a pretty heap on the lawn now hidden under the last fall of autumn leaves. "What do you think a girl is made of, really? Am I bomb proof, and air tight, and warranted not to go up, or go off? You should

have seen me shirr a big hole in my best stocking this morning, to know how weakly and sickeningly human I am."

"Oh, the shame!" exclaimed Helen. "I should have fixed that——"

"Oh, never, Helen!" and Jane spoke with newly assumed asperity. "You remember you are not to do a single thing for me or Judith. Those gossipy girls must have none of that sort of thing to fall back on. I shirr my own socks and wear my own blisters, thank you just the same."

Helen's face fell, and she kicked at her heels in the new girl fashion. All the girls did that, and she unconsciously had acquired the trick. Judith picked up the cue, and presently all three were kicking their own flat shoed heels.

"I said my own blisters," put in Jane. "This is not a contest," and she patted the heel supposed to be affected from the rosetted stocking.

"Judy, I had a lovely letter from Aunt Mary," and the soft gray eyes went dewy. "It is wonderful at El Capitan just now——"

"Jane Allen, you stop this very minute. Do you want me to run away? I was dreaming of Fedario. I heard your old uke so late last night, it went into my sleeping brain, and Jane Allen, I

simply can't bear to think of Montana these days. I would have one of the boys send me a false alarm wire, if I thought dear little Aunt Mary would take me in." Judy was snivelling and sobbing in the most woebegone manner. That El Capitan was glorious in autumn was not to be denied, and both girls looked rather wistfully toward the setting sun.

"There's Drusilla Landers and Norma Travers!" exclaimed Jane, happily breaking in on Judith's dirge. "Let's overtake them, and have company to the post office. I want to walk so fast I shall not be able to think. I feel exactly like giving my head a real rest, Judy."

"You have been cramming. I know it. And I saw you with the pretty red-headed soph. I understand that you could not avoid falling in love with her. Your hair is auburn, and hers is the very next station—red. But, Jane, remember your responsibilities and keep fit. We need you in our office, and we are going to run a basketball try-out next week. You are to be Center, you know. There is positively no chance of bolting that, even if the honors do rather overburden you. I don't notice any flying at my own poor head."

"More's the pity. You would make a wonder-

ful Center, Judy, and you will stick to Guard. Are you perfectly sure you are not dodging?"

"Sure as shooting, Jane. Nobody wants me to be Center. They all think I have honor enough being little old Guard. And as far as I am personally concerned, I guess it will do for the time being. Hello, Drusa, and hello again, Norma! Whither away, fair maids?"

"'Low girls," came the reply from the two in sweaters and corduroy skirts. "We are on a miniature hike—to the post. Any mail to keep the home fires burning?" joked Drusilla.

"We are with you," and Jane fell in step with Drusilla while Judith sprang along side Norma. "Yes, we have mail, and we have need for open air, the kind we get outside the grounds. Crickey, but one's brain does get stuffy on a day like this. I feel I have acquired enough Euclid to take over the internal revenue," and Jane sighed audibly.

"Me," said Judith comically, "I have acquired enough sass to fight the Marians. I believe they are massing for attack."

"Oh, yes, won't we have a great time to-night?" exclaimed Norma. "Jane, I hope you have all your moral and mental life preservers on."

"Quite ready for the onslaught," replied Jane,

but Judith guessed rightfully when she surmised the painfully crowded head was not entirely traceable to class work. There was a mixture of personal anxiety at the turn affairs had taken, and Jane Allen had promised herself Helen Powderly would not be socially ostracised on account of her peculiar status in Wellington.

"She is the best little scout in college," Jane had repeatedly assured herself, "therefore, why should she be made a victim of girls' foolish whims? Isn't she more worthy than they, who could not earn their way in on merit if put to the test?"

Coming and going to the post office, an entirely unnecessary jaunt, as mail boxes were an important part of the Wellington equipment, the quartette met with, and passed out any number of students on this particular autumn afternoon, but their handicap in stride was, perhaps, well balanced by the merry laughter and good natured calls repeatedly hailed to Jane.

Election night embraced delicious possibilities, and all classes seemed fittingly keyed up, joyous and expectant.

CHAPTER XVII

POTENTIAL ENEMIES

THE time had come! Disclosures promised real sensations, and Jane, quiet, composed, if a trifle flushed, waited rather uneasily in her place beside the retiring class president.

Just across the room, directly below the big desk, sat Marian Seaton, surrounded by a chattering crowd, taking advantage fully of the open session preceding the formal program.

Hazel Manners, the retiring president, looking very handsome and very charming, in her senior gown, with the cap's tassel still to the left, however, made a happy and appropriate little speech in stepping down. She assured the girls of her willingness and wish to assist them, by advice with any matter her experience might make valuable to them. Hazel was one of the most popular

girls in college, and it was undoubtedly the aspiration of every girl present to become like Hazel in her senior year.

Jane thanked her gracefully, and took the place at the desk. A few words of consecration, as Jane expressed it, opened the new period of class history.

This was the signal for all outsiders to withdraw; that is, all except the guards, these being two of the faculty, always on hand to keep order.

With characteristic directness Jane plunged into the most difficult part of the meeting.

Instantly everyone changed positions, that shifting move, usually marking a new angle in a sermon, and after that one could have heard a pin drop in the big room.

"To sustain my reputation and on that account only," Jane began, "I am prompted to open a subject bound to be rather distressing to all. I refer to the question of my change of heart on the matter of taking this office. I had said positively I would not take it, and now here I am. In such a position I feel obliged to give a reason for my decision, to my splendid supporters."

Applause interrupted Jane at this point. Not only did the girls want to know what happened

on election night, but they had no hesitancy in publicly proclaiming their interest.

"When you began your meeting at which you hoped to elect me (Applause) I had fully intended to decline, but scarcely had I settled down to wait for your call than another came—it was an urgent call to go to Rutherford Inn, where, the message said, I would meet a relative, who was in distress! I have few relatives (Jane paused a moment)and that call sent me flying out to Rutherford!" Audible breathing marked the interval.

"But no sooner did I cross the threshold of the Inn than I was seized by—someone, or some two or three, and after a rather rough tussle I succeeded finally in getting free," declared Jane. "Of course, I knew then it had been a trick to kidnap me!"

Cries of "shame," "foul," and hisses broke in on the monologue here, and Jane was obliged to rap loudly for order.

"Kidnapping is positively forbidden in class rules," Minette managed to make heard, "and the perpetrators should be brought to trial."

"Madam President! Madam President!" shouted a girl from the opposition. "I demand to be heard——"

"Miss Tracy has the floor," conceded Jane.

"The rules were not violated. We did not kidnap a candidate. You had not yet accepted," Miss Tracy shouted in verbal chunks.

"No such interpretation can be placed on rule five!" replied Jane calmly. "The secretary will please read rule five, by-laws."

Theodora Guthrie, known as Ted, fat and flustered, stood up with the little typewritten pamphlet of rules and by-rules. She thumbed the pages to find the desired section, and after a preliminary cough and some squirming of her touseled black head, waited for a signal from Jane (Ted was a very careful secretary), then she proceeded:

"Section two, by-law five: candidates: No candidate shall be forcibly or strategetically detained from her caucus, at any time calculated to debar her from office. This shall apply to abductions, kidnapping, stunts, and tricks, hitherto allowed, but from this date and by this section now prohibited."

"That seems to cover the case," said the president.

"It does not," shouted the spokesman for the opposition, Rose Bowers, without regard for voice, or its effect on her listeners. "If that were

true with Jane Allen, it was equally true with Marian Seaton. She was kidnapped by the other side."

"Nothing of the kind," interrupted Dozia Dalton. "I was——"

"Silence! Order!" called the crier, Judith. "We shall be obliged to clear the room at the first sign of disorder. We have given our word to the guards."

"Yes, and that order must be obeyed," insisted the chair, namely, Jane Allen. "We shall be pleased to hear each in turn. Secretary, who has the floor?"

"The report of the secretary on the rules was just finished," replied Ted Guthrie.

"And I ask the secretary to make a record that the rule covered the case of illegal abduction," went on Jane. "I may add further that the trick of bringing my relations into the fight was, in my opinion, small and cowardly. At a call from home I would have gotten into an airship without question—any girl would."

Applause and hisses mingled at this, until the latter caught up with the former, merging all the sounds into a conglomeration of noises such as only school girls know how to issue. Order at length restored, the meeting proceeded.

"Madam President! May I speak?" called Dozia Dalton.

"Miss Dalton has the floor," replied Jane, before anyone else could cut in.

"I would like to tell what happened to me on election night," Dozia began, and again the apprehensive silence, preluding something of deep interest, was so loud it could almost be heard.

"Proceed," ordered Jane.

"When I took the password and grip from our contingent I found a stranger in our lines. I called her out and she ran!"

"That was——"

"No interruptions, please! Miss Dalton, go on."

"When I followed I found the runaway was Miss Seaton!"

"Oh, shame!" came from more than one voice. "Spying! Sneaking!"

"I was not," declared Miss Seaton hotly, now on her feet. "I had a perfect right to be in the Allen lines. Why shouldn't I?"

"Miss Dalton has not finished," Jane ordered with a very considerate nod to Marian who still stood, thus claiming the floor. She finally sat down but kept up a mumble for some moments.

"Yes, I found the leader, Marian Seaton, had

stolen into our ranks, perhaps to give all our secrets to the opposition," went on Dozia mercilessly, and plainly excited.

"And you tried to tie my feet!" swung in Marian.

"And you tried to gag me!" almost shouted Dozia.

"They both tumbled into the lake," fired in a freshman who never should have spoken, but was too new to know of her disbarment.

A roar of honest laughter greeted this announcement. It was not difficult to picture Dozia trying to tie Marian's feet, and Marian trying to gag Dozia, with the result of both girls rolling into the lake.

"And of course," continued Dozia, "I could not get to the meeting at all. I had to stay in that cold, dark boat house——"

"What about me?" again interrupted the indignant Marian. "I was kept away from the hall, and I got a very bad cold——"

"Oh, too bad. Wasn't that awful! Dear little thing!" and similar exclamations crowded out Marian's attempt to gain sympathy.

"We have two different charges here, it seems to me," replied the now judicial Jane. "One is, that a girl from the other side stole into the ranks

of the right with the intention of betraying secrets, and——"

"No such thing, that isn't so. We had a right there with our own class," and a string of such outcries from Marian's corner interrupted Jane.

"Not after sides had been taken and candidates chosen," declared Jane indomitably.

"But why could I not vote—for your—candidate?" asked Marian in a quaking voice.

"Oh! oh! oh! oh! oh! As if you would!" came the call of the squad that should have saved its tones for cheering on other occasions.

"Well, I claim I had a perfect right to be in that line. And I am going to take the matter to the faculty," persisted Marian rather feebly.

"You will have no occasion to," snapped Jane, forgetting the dignity of her office. "I dislike, very much, this petty squabbling and I am determined, this year, to keep our reputation clear of it. If you want any redress other than to stand by the result of all our meetings you can ask for a special session, and we will thrash it out, if it takes all night, but I am against any one carrying tales to the faculty. It is a small and—childish thing to do, and we all claim to be at least old enough to be in college," finished Jane.

"I move that we give three rousing cheers for our new president," spoke up little Dorothy Blyden. This was responded to by so many "second its" the secretary was obliged to ask: "Who seconded that motion?" But meanwhile the three rousing cheers were echoing through the old study hall.

"And will someone move that we invite the opposition to come in on the committees?" generously asked Jane.

"No need to do that," snapped Marian Seaton, "for until this matter is adjusted, I, as leader, shall oppose uniting with the Allens," she almost sneered at the word Allens. "And I will ask for a special investigation, in spite of the opposite views having been expressed," grandiloquently finished the vanquished leader.

"Any other business? If not, we stand adjourned," called Jane resonantly, and the celebration which followed seemed to lack nothing from the fact that all the class was not represented in its numbers.

A feature of the occasion, as reported in "The Trumpet," was the new president, Jane Allen, seated on a pyramid of cushions, crowned with a glorious feather duster, meanwhile dispensing sweet music from her home-made uke.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE WOES OF "ALIAS HELEN"

A FALL evening, dark, dreary and drizzling.

The amount of work to be prepared for next day seemed heavier and more difficult than usual and Jane Allen, humanly responsive, felt keenly the natural reaction of the wild week of honors and excitement.

It was almost time to "call it a day" when a very timid tap at the door, brought the bronze head up with welcome attention.

"Come!"

It was Helen—teary, and distrait. Helen with tie askew and hair tousled. Helen with eyes too bright and cheeks too red, and breath too short for normal.

"Oh, Helen, do come in! What is the matter?"

Jane brushed the papers from the wicker chair,

and Helen sank in it. The red eyes were pressed with a small wet ball, and the unsympathetic curls from her forehead dug into teary lashes with pure teasing persistency.

"Child, why do you cry?" asked Jane with a precision of manner suitable for an occasion such as this. Helen regarded abrupt speech as a mark of indifference, and Jane surmised this was no time for indifference.

"Oh, my dear friend!" sobbed the crestfallen Helen. "It—is too much, I cannot to—stand it!"

"What, Helen? What has happened? Tell your own Janey!" and with a caress, unmistakable in its sincerity, Jane dropped on a stool at the feet of the sobbing Polish girl.

"I thought not to tell you—it is too much that I should be like a baby," went on Helen, endeavoring with poor result, to check her choking sobs, "but to-night, I feel I must go!"

"Why, child! Go where?"

"That is what is too hard. I cannot know where, but to go—Oh, I must, Jane darling! I can no longer stand it all!"

"Now, Helen, tell me about it. You know it cannot be so serious that we shall not find a remedy," Jane coaxed.

"First, when I came here you know I heard many words—of anger that I, Helen Podonsky, should be at an American college." Something like triumph rang in the voice that now spoke the Polish name. "But I did not protest, I had the very good friends, and I loved them dearly." The brown curly head tossed with unmistakable pride, and Jane was surprised and charmed at the note evolving in the hitherto docile little Helen.

"Very many times," continued Helen in even tones, "I would have told you about that detestable girl—she who goes about at my heels, and listens at my door, until my dear roommate, Dicky Ripple, told Mrs. Weatherbee all about it."

"Dicky told Mrs. Weatherbee about whom?" asked Jane in surprise.

"I hate the name too much to utter it. To-night you must pardon me, my dear Jane, but I am indignant, and I feel the Podonsky power breaking in all my veins." An eloquent gesture, two arms thrust out with power unmistakable, accompanied this assertion. Surely, Helen was betraying a new attribute—she was dramatically indignant! Something had aroused her slumbering pride, something had awakened her dormant

lineal glory. Helen Powderly was not at the moment Helka Podonsky. It was a new Helka, all Polish, all artist, all self confident, that confronted Jane.

"Oh, you mean Marian Seaton?" Jane was glad to insert. "I have had so much trouble from that girl, Helen dear, that I am now immune, that is, it no longer gives sorrow or worry. I just expect it like bad storms and other calamities."

"But when a girl is a sneak, when she makes trouble, so one cannot go to sleep, when she hisses into other girls' ears such things as are—lies—then, what would you do?"

"She has done all of that to me, Helen. My first year here was a nightmare, in spots," and Jane tried to inject a little mirth into the fast-growing seriousness of the conversation. "But I got over it (she might have said "rose above it," but Jane was humble). Yes, Helen, I did suffer just as you have described, and now you see the other girls are my friends, and she is losing all her companions."

"For you, yes, that is all good. You are the president of our class, and much loved, much honored, Jane Allen. But for Helen Powderly, who has a wrong name, who got to college by tricks,

who is perhaps some spy! Ugh! It is too much!"

That surely was foreign. No American girl could indulge in that sort of melodrama, and hope to retain her reputation as a well-bred member of society. It was too impassioned, too effusive, too altogether out of harmony. Yet Jane was secretly admitting it was sincere! It rang true! And it was gloriously frank! She admired the spirit, if she did somewhat discount the tone of voice.

"Now, Helen dear, I am sure you are just a little bit mistaken. Even the hateful Marian would not do such injustice as to pile all that dishonor on your pretty head. Don't you think something has made your nerves—too tight, and they hurt the way you are stretching them?" Jane realized this was a weak simile, but it was not easy to give Helen a clear understanding always, and the intricacies of this conversation taxed even Jane's ready flow of speech.

"Nerves! nerves!" repeated Helen with something like a sneer. "Wo do not grow nerves in Poland, my dear friend. We must work hard for our art, and every hardship puts its foot on the squirming nerves. No artist can grow big, with those nerves biting her power."

Another revelation! Helen had her own psychology. This "killing of nerves" for the good of talent, was quite philosophical, if a trifle vague in the abstract. Jane bethought herself a nerveless career was, indeed, idealistic.

"But what has happened just now?" pressed Jane. "What has Marian been doing to so distress you?"

Helen sank again into an attitude of polite concentration. She even smiled into the gray eyes that compelled her love, and confidence.

"I was out in the far grove, under the trees," she began. "I go there to hear the wild wind shriek and wail, so I may make those notes on my violin. Last night the wind howled like some awful frightened spirit, and I knew our masters made their wonderful music from such inspiration. I was sitting in a low branch, the wind rocked me like a playmate, and up in the trees, those shrieking, wonderful notes, oh—if I can only catch them!" she paused, and in the interval Jane visioned Helen up in that tree—as Judith would have said, "she had a life-sized picture" of the girl and her violin, in the tree, under the shrieking night winds, strong enough last night to blow girl and violin into realms of inspiration she so coveted. Presently as Jane nodded:

"It was too lovely to be there, and gently draw from my beloved violin the echo of that wind music. But the hateful girl! She had followed, and when I was so happy, with one margic strain, when she laughed out loud, horrible! She hissed and—made the noise to destroy my inspiration, to frighten away my beloved notes, and their little graces."

"Oh, that was too bad, surely, Helen," considered the rather bewildered Jane. She knew very well what effect the "movie" in the tree would naturally have on a girl like Marian. "But you must understand she knows nothing of the art or its inspirations," finished Jane.

"That I know also, and I could forgive the ignorance. But she mocks me," declared the unhappy girl, "she says vile things—she says—I am—mad!"

"Oh!"

That was it! Marian had taunted Helen with being mad! This was really serious, and Jane showed her apprehension by a complete silence. To prevent the little foreigner from a precipitous withdrawal from Wellington was now her problem.

CHAPTER XIX

TEAMS AND TEAMSTERS

"BUT we must attend to our practice, Judith, this very afternoon I have called for a full team. We are to meet the girls of Breslin, and no personal worries must be allowed to interfere with the duties of our team. You know, Judy dear, no one is more anxious than I to have dear little Helen's tangle straightened out, and I am going to it with all the wild and wooley in my make-up," Jane almost smiled, but there was a qualified twist at her mouth corners, and such an effect had often been called an ingrowing smile, id est: A smile fraught with fury.

"Oh, all right, Janey!" assented Judith. "I, like you, dear, am anxious to vanquish both foes, to wit: Breslin and Marian, but I am not so keen for practice. Janey, do you think I could work

up a little water on the knee, or housemaid's ankle, or something like that, just for this afternoon? I have the prospect of the loveliest hike—out to Blighty our poney England, you know. I would love to go, but, of course, if I must make baskets for the sophs——"

"You really must, Judith. I will take no excuse positively. Besides, Judy dear, we are to have an audience this afternoon, and do you think I will stand for our team being minus our tall, striking, beautiful Junoesque——"

"Perfect thirty-six! Halt! All right, Jane. I shall be on hand. Consider the bid accepted," and Judith flounced out in mock pomp, her limited skirt confines yanked out, in comic imitation of the sweeping court costume.

Basketball fever had set in with epidemic proportions. Every minute in the day available, or capable of being snatched, was occupied with the little blue book guaranteed to give all the rules, all the official information, all the strategic signals, and all the game of girls' basketball, visionary and actual, the only omission noticeable being ball and basket.

Last year's uniforms of green were decided upon as an economic measure, the war price of wools, and the actual scarcity of such ma-

terials putting a ban on the commodities usually used in college athletic costumes.

Jane had lined up her team, all pledged to run to the gym directly three thirty was dismissed. Grazia St Clair was one of the most promising forwards, and she had already proven her prowess. She could duck and dodge and sprint and "shoot a basket" while her companions of the team were extricating themselves from each others stockings. Judith occupied the critical position of standing center, and all her wisdom coupled with her indomitable push, earned the rather mystifying title of Towser. It was "get 'em, Towser!" and "shake 'em, Towser!" until Judith felt a peculiar interest in the very bones, inadvertently left on her dinner plate.

It was to be expected that Marian Seaton would occupy a place on the opposition team within Wellington. After many difficult meetings and "pow-wows" it was finally "amicably" agreed that two teams be formed from the juniors and sophs. The coach and managers were from the senior lines as were the referee and umpire.

On the first or Team One, Jane and her followers were placed, while the second, or Team Two, included Marian, Antonia Dexter, otherwise Tony, Mildred Jennings, Martha Rutledge,

Dolorez Vincez and Molly Igo, all new girls with the exception of Marian. Just what ability this team possessed was a matter of interesting speculation for Team One. All worked hard and earnestly and every day was Field Day in the gym!

The epidemic spread alarmingly, until teams called respectively the Subs, the Scrubs, the Grubs and even the Dubs, fell into line, as naturally as birds following on the wing, and lonely indeed was the Wellington, who boasted not of her place on some of the many teams and teamsters. Helen took readily to the sport, and with Dickey Ripple and Weasie Blair, she worked enthusiastically with the Scrubs until the night of her interview with Jane, after that she lost heart. All Wellington seemed engulfed with the wave of basketball and that the circumspect faculty did not fall victims to the peril of the wily sphere can scarcely be affirmed with confidence. Weasie Blair declared she heard Mrs. Weatherbee arguing with Miss Rutledge on the difference between a personal foul and a technical foul, and Gloria Gude insisted her chemistry prof talked "dribbles" when she meant molecules.

On this particular afternoon Jane marshalled her forces, and not taking no for an answer from

Judith, who preferred a hike to practice, had succeeded in getting a full team on the floor. As class president Jane felt it her duty to keep up the morale of her constituents in all sports. Massing for basketball might have been considered an obligation of captain or other official, although Jane assumed it willingly, thus leaving the upper class girls free for a more interesting part in the sport.

As the teams lined up some new rules just issued, were explained by the officials. They related principally to rulings and duties of scorers and referees and were quickly disposed of. All of the girls declared the old rules plenty good enough, and sufficiently complicated, nevertheless, the official guide for collegiates was their standard, and in spite of opposition the more complicated lines finally became part of the day's lesson. It was towards the end of the second half at this practice game that poor Judith met her Waterloo in the way of a turned ankle. It seemed like Fate of course, as Judith had joked about the desirability of acquiring some small accident to relieve her of the day's obligations, nevertheless the ankle had a very poor sense of humor, for it hurt, and Judith crumpled in a miserable little heap of blue serge and groans.

"Don't try to stand on it, Judy dear," cautioned Jane with a show of some anxiety in her voice.

"Stand on it!" wailed Judith. "I don't believe I shall stand on that foot while I live. It hurts badly enough to last all my mortal life."

"A mere trick," whispered Dorolez Vincez to Marian Seaton.

"Hush!" cautioned the wise Marian. "Better not—let them hear you say that. They are all half cocked, ready to go off at any moment," and the two opposition leaders, arm in arm, left the crowd gathered around the ill-fated Judith.

"All the same," Dolorez insisted, "they will take that as an excuse to put in a stronger sub. See if they don't. Stearns will not be able to play the Breslin game, and like as not our noble Jane (this with a sneer) will see to it that some upper class girl with skill, instead of giggles, takes the forward. I propose, Marian, that you be prepared to fight for disqualification, if they try that little time trick."

"Oh, I don't believe they will, Dolorez." Even Marian was surprised at such suspicion. "You must have had a lot of experience? You are not really a professional, are you?"

"Oh, no!" and the foreign girl laughed de-

risively. "I have played a lot, but I am a junior here, am I not?"

"Yes, of course," Marian assented. Nevertheless there was a note of uncertainty in her voice.

"Of course we are going to beat them," went on the South American girl. "It is a good fight always, when we have two teams in one division. I have a little trick up my angel sleeve that they never could guess."

"But, Dolorez," cautioned Marian, "our rules are very strict, and we must conform to them. I want to beat the Jays of course, but we have to do it openly. We will never succeed with any trick where Jane Allen is concerned."

"Oh, my! Since when has she won you over?"

"She has not won me over! In fact, I despise her more than ever, but I know we have got to meet facts, and that is a fact beyond dispute. If we want to hand the game to the Jays, all we have to do is to try on a few tricks. It would start them off like a match to gasoline. We would surely go up without smoke. No, Dolorez, I have been here for three years, you know, and I must admit some of the peculiar qualifications of our little red-head. They are to be counted on when a real fight is in the air."

"Oh, all right, captain," and Dolorez smiled the queer smile that even Marian did not relish. "Just as you say. But we must beat the Jays," and it seemed to Marian the black eyes flashed dangerously, and betrayed more animus than might be safely dealt out in basketball.

Meanwhile Judith was being comforted and consoled with so many kinds of sympathy that Jane insisted she be carried back to her room and allowed to suffer in peace.

"I wanna die! I wanna die!" wailed the afflicted one. "I can't go to the dance, and I can't kick any more——"

"Oh, yes, you can," Dozia Dalton, who had carried her head, put in. "You will kick, Judith, after the bugle blows!"

"And think of all the fudge you will get!" Grazia reminded her. Grazia was supporting the "intact leg."

"And you may have my Yale pillow, that is inspiring enough to give thrills in the dullest hour," offered Dicky Ripple.

"Oh, yes, I know, it is lovely of you all," Judith managed to articulate, "but you have got your old ankles to fall back on. But take the advice of a friend—don't fall."

CHAPTER XX

STEMMING THE TIDE

ONE reaction after another made up the program of Wellington, and directly after the big practice game, at which Judith turned her ankle, Jane was confronted again with Helen's plea that she be allowed to withdraw from college. All the minor anxieties of the little Polish girl cemented now into the one great obstacle of terror—that a girl should have called her mad!

"Mad! Mad!" Helen kept repeating, and so great was her distress that Jane actually feared for a collapse of nerves, if not for some real mental disturbance.

"We must go to Mrs. Weatherbee," Jane insisted, as Helen sobbed and sighed in her room, declining to be comforted and refusing to go out for any exercise. "I must talk it over with her.

She is motherly and kind, and will know best what to do."

"But please no!" begged Helen. "I would not that you ask Mrs. Weatherbee. It would mean so much trouble, and I cannot stand more."

"But, Helen dear, it is our only way of bringing those hateful girls to their senses. I will not agree that they go along unpunished, when they deliberately take every occasion to cause you fear and anxiety. We cannot stop them if——"

"Oh, but my dearest friend!" begged Helen. "You will not do that! I could not stay at Wellington if you ask for any action by the faculty."

Jane was baffled. Why did Helen always insist upon secrecy? Why could she not go to Mrs. Weatherbee and demand that Marian and her followers be compelled to desist? For a moment or two she pondered: then decided to ask Helen outright.

"Helen dear, can you not tell Jane, why you do not want any assistance from the faculty? Why do you always—seem to fear—something?"

It was extremely difficult for Jane to express herself so directly to the very much alarmed little Helen, but the time had come, Jane felt, when

the question should be put straightforward and frankly.

Helen looked like someone about to be executed—or as one might imagine such an unfortunate looking. Her big dark eyes fairly blazed, and she put her two hands up in a most tragic pose.

"My friend! My benefactress!" she exclaimed. "You will not ask me—all now. I will tell you with gladness soon—I hope, but for a little time wait—till poor Helka can speak," and she fell in a heap, crumpled and miserable at Jane's feet. Never had Jane seen anything so like tragedy enacted in a school girl's room. Never before had she witnessed such a scene as this, so wrought with dark and mysterious foreboding. She pressed a kind hand on the black head that lay upon her knee, then raised the tear-stained face.

"Helen dear, I believe you!" she whispered. "Whatever may be the real motive, I know it is an honest one, and I shall do as you ask. Of course, I feel helpless to assist you, as I should like, as I am prevented from asking the aid of those empowered to help us all at Wellington, nevertheless, I guess we can do something. We girls are as strong at least as our opponents, and we have right on our side. So cheer up, Helen

dear! Come out, try to pretend you are over your nervous spell, so that they will have less chance to criticise. You must promise me something, too, little girl! See, I have promised you!"

"Oh, yes, Jane dear, ask and I promise!"

"That you will not ask to leave Wellington!"

From a look of fear and horror, gradually there stole into the dark misty eyes an expression of determination. With it the proud head again assumed its poise, Jane had so often thought to be almost regal, and the flaming cheeks composed now into a mold of beauty and dignity.

"I shall agree to the wish!" declared Helen, taking Jane's hand, and pressing it to her lips. "As you ask it I shall give it. I will not go away from the dear Wellington."

"There, that's the spirit, Helen. If you take that attitude you will conquer all comers," she said rather irreverently, considering Helen's meager store of paraphrased English.

"Yes, I will try! It is more noble to stand up than to—fall!" answered Helen, thus betraying her actual knowledge of Jane's argument. "I will not be a coward—I will fight as my—father —my brother. They did not lay down at Warsaw! They fought to death!"

Again Jane was conscious of the atmosphere

of tragedy. Somehow Helen was very unusual, and Jane confessed to herself just now, rather difficult. Notwithstanding these drawbacks, however, Jane was still firm as ever in her belief that Helka Podonsky was a persecuted girl, an artist, and probably a born aristocrat. Surely all this was guarantee of her worth and reliability.

The tapping at Jane's door, for some moments left unanswered, became more insistent, and satisfying herself that Helen had regained her composure, Jane now proceeded to answer the summons.

As the door opened two blue eyes blazed in.

"Jane Allen!" sang out Clarisse Cummings, she known as the prettiest freshie. "We are having an awful time; and I have been appointed a committee of one to come to your highness (this with a jerk of a curtsy) to beg arbitration."

"Come in, Clarisse," Jane interrupted. "I have not much time before class, but I shall be glad to help you if I can."

"Oh, you surely can. Hello, Nellie!" to Helen. "Where ever have you been? Sick?"

"Just nerves," assisted Jane, as Helen smiled a "non vult" to the charge. "Helen has been working very hard with her violin, and some-

times out of doors at that. Strange we have so little understanding of the artistic temperament."

"Oh, yes—of course," faltered Clarisse, and her manner gave clue to Jane that the "arbitration" requested might have something to do with Helen.

"I knew you must be sick, Nell," purred the pretty one, "and I insisted you should not be put out until we had heard your side."

"Put out?" asked Helen, awakening at last to a sign of interest.

"Yes, you know you have not been to drill for days, and we have to have the show before the sophs get ahead of us. They always have their show right in the glories of Hallowe'en, and the witches get all played out——"

"And tangled up in their broom sticks, until the very best hair dressers among us cannot untangle the wigs," finished Jane. "You are perfectly right, Clarisse. You youngsters have been working hard at your show for weeks, and you cannot allow the sophs to get the barn first. What's the real difficulty?"

Clarisse squatted down on the big floor cushion, her skirt just touching her knees by the scantest rim. She doubled her feet backward in regular style of the Jap-Turk-Indian, etc. Pencil

threatening her red lips with poisonous smudges and "eyes right" as her squad would have described it, the pretty one attempted to impart to Jane information certainly not intended for Helen's ears. Seeing her confusion Jane mercifully attempted to relieve it.

"Suppose you rest this afternoon, Helen," she said. "I shall take your excuse in, if you wish."

"Oh, thank you, but I am sure I feel all right now," replied Helen, taking the cue signalling her departure. "I always feel refreshed when I have talked with my very good friend."

"That's nice of you, dear," Jane accepted, opening the door. "Run in again after two thirty. I shall be at leisure and glad to see you again. By that time you will know exactly how you feel about taking a furlough."

The military term was one with which the Polish girl was entirely familiar, and she guessed rightly that Jane had used it to convey the idea of a possible "furlough" from class work. Helen was still very shaky, still far from being convinced that her persecutors would be silenced with their insidious gossip, and until all this could be satisfactorily straightened out, Helen might find it necessary to remain away from the general assemblages.

Smiling, she withdrew. Then Clarisse untwined her ankles and assumed the aggressive.

"Oh, Jane—Miss Allen!"

"Jane is better, Clara. What can I do for the prettiest little freshie of them all?"

"Now don't tease, please," and blue eyes vied with dimples as star attractions. "I am so excited——"

"I see you are!"

"Miss Allen!" quite severely. "Are you really laughing at me?"

"Why, Clara, my dear, cannot an old friend tease just a little bit to show her love for the Babes? You know, Clara, sometimes I am so sorry I have to grow up."

Reassured, and again smiling, Clarisse took on still another attitude, determined to emphatically emphasize the seriousness of her mission. She could not guess that Jane's apparent joking had a motive, if not sinister, then deeply planned. Jane was stalling. She was using up time to kill time, and she played against time for time. All of which college girls are supposed to understand as within the ethics of school girl diplomacy.

"Well, Janie, it is this way," again attempted the persistent freshman. "We have our show all planned. It is entirely original—we wrote every

word of it and Nellie composed the music. Did you know that?"

"No, I did not!" admitted Jane, now showing interest.

"Of course you didn't. It was all a deep secret. But just when we were ready to drop the girls down the chimney—oh, that was another secret——"

"Trust me. I shall never disclose the dark, dire secret," Jane assured her.

"No, I am sure you will not. You see, the story called for two girls to come down the barn chimney——"

"Barn swallows," suggested Jane.

"No, chimney sweeps," corrected Clarisse. "The story was laid in London, and we had Mad Madge of Moscow. Of course that was Nellie because she had to play the violin—just fiddle away all the time." Jane was beginning to see light. Mad Madge for Helen in the face of the perfidious gossip declaring her really mad!

"It all went perfectly beautiful," Clarisse declared, "until some girls said—well, they said it was so easy for Nellie to act the mad part she must be—what the other girls said she was." Little Clarisse was too childlike, and too well bred to bolt out with the accusation that Helen had

been called mad. But Jane sensed the story as clearly as if it had been actually screened before her eyes. Yes, in all Helen's school affairs, this gossip was now injecting its poison. Even so absurd a story gained credence with action like rolling a snowball, growing as it turns.

"But why let such foolish talk influence you?" asked Jane.

"Oh, we didn't! Indeed we didn't!" This with wide-eyed consternation. "But the trouble was with the pickets. When we went to the campus house all along the other side not a girl would accept a ticket——"

"Don't you think that was just a case of boycott?" suggested Jane.

"Well, maybe so. But we had to have the Flip-Flops. You know we call those girls who are always changing quarters the Flip-Flops. Isn't that a dreadful name? But Dickey Ripple stuck it on."

"They are changeable, to say the least, and they do stunts very like the Flip-Flop," Jane agreed, "still it is not a pretty title to sail under."

"No, I realize that," apologized the gullible Clarisse, "and I didn't mean to use the horrid word again. First thing we know it will slip

out in faculty hearing, then we will be disciplined. Well, anyway, where was I at?"

"At distributing your invitations. You said they were refused. On what grounds, Clara?"

"First, because we had Nellie in the cast, and second, because they said she might get—flighty and land knows only what. I am sure they could not have meant she might get dangerous."

Rare sense for a freshman, Jane decided. All the other flings at helpless little Helen could not include that of being "dangerous at large." Jane considered for a moment. Clarisse waited, eager and hopeful.

"And just what was it you wanted me to do?" asked Jane finally.

"Why, to call a meeting, and announce our play, and put Helen down as a special attraction. Her violin is wonderful, and you know it is the very first time she has consented to play in public."

Clarisse was quite breathless now, and Jane fell back bewildered. After all, the little girls demanded nothing extraordinary, but simple as the request was, Jane could not promise to grant it.

"I fear Helen would not like that," she replied carefully. "You know artists are very queer

about any publicity previous to their grand debut. And Helen has such a wonderful concert planned for her real coming out," said Jane.

"Oh, but just here in school couldn't matter. Really, Miss Allen, we will be completely lost if you do not assist us," and again the dimples melted into little leaks, that threatened to overflow at the mouth ends.

"All right, dear. I will see if I can arrange it," assented Jane, "but you know I have to consult the executive committee about calling a meeting. We might do it more simply, and more effectively, some other way. At any rate, you may count on us. We won't see our little freshman outclassed by such underhand methods."

"That's just it. Why don't you tell Mrs. Weatherbee?"

"Oh, it seems too silly! And besides you recall our pledge not to carry tales to the faculty! You wouldn't have your president be the first to break the very rule she was most insistent upon adopting?"

"Oh, no, that's so," agreed Clarisse. "I remember now, you did say we were not to carry tales. Very well, I am satisfied. I think, as a committee of one I have been quite a success, thanks to our president," and she made a perky bow.

CHAPTER XXI

THE TWO JAYS

ALONE, Jane pondered seriously over the new aspect her problem had assumed. Never had so absurd a story gained more prompt impetus—the result, presumably, of well-laid plans, the work of Marian Seaton. In her own generosity Jane would have made allowance even for her proclaimed enemy, but the width and breadth, to say nothing of the depths of this propaganda, were beyond her ken.

"Strange," she reflected, "Marian always makes a confidant of someone who, herself, is unlike our other girls."

This "someone" was just now Dolorez Vincez, the South American girl, obviously much older than her companions at Wellington, and certainly of an entirely different social cast. Dolorez had made things unpleasant for Helen on

more than one occasion, although she seemed to avoid openly meeting her. An unseen power operating against her had been most effective.

"I must talk to Judy," Jane decided. "No use my going woozy all alone. Better have company," she wisely decided.

"That's the worse of an ankle," Judith greeted her chum. "One can't take it along and leave it at home at the same time. There is mine now, perfectly good for limping to the hard-working classrooms, and utterly useless for hiking, dancing and sprinting. How's the big game coming on? Sit down, dear. I don't need every cushion, and all the chairs."

Jane dropped into the chair indicated by Judith, who still hugged her ankle and "enjoyed" the ill health of its injured condition. As her friends had predicted Judith was the recipient of much fudge, all sorts of books, and even hothouse flowers, purloined from chapel. She had been nursing the foot for some days, and took to it so naturally, Jane feared for a reasonably prompt convalescence.

"Big game is coming along finely, but how is the foot, Judy? Won't be able to play, will you?"

"No, worse luck. But I can Umph or Referee or Coach—anything to be in. Think of losing

that straw ride out to Breslin! And I'll bet a big spread after it! Janey, put me down—quick for a couple of non-combative jobs."

"Of course, Judy, you will be along. And I must report progress on the practice work, but I want to speak of something really serious."

"Spare me!" Judith mocked her words with the usual funny grab at her head . "I am not in a serious mood."

"I don't blame you, if you have emptied all those fudge boxes lately. I should think you would be in a ruminative mood. But Judy, listen. It's about dear little Helen. Something must be done."

"I know what must be done," and Judith was instantly all serious and attentive. "We should have hateful Marian Seaton expelled from this college, as a trouble maker. Did you ever hear of one girl carrying that sort of thing on through three mortal years, without paying for it? I thought last year I sensed reform, but it was only a case of latent or dormant activity. It has broken out now in so many places we can't keep track of them."

"But Judy, we have no grounds to ask for her expulsion. She has not done anything in absolute violation of the rules."

"Exactly it. She always manages to cover her tracks. Well, what is the particular new trouble?"

Jane reviewed Helen's visit, and then told of the appeal made by Clarisse. She included the fact that Helen had promised not to try to leave Wellington, which was one point gained, and one of particular importance.

"The poor little child," sympathized Judith. "To think they have gone after her like that! Would you think girls, claiming to be Americans, could be so cold hearted?"

"I am not sure it is a purely American work, that is, North American," said Jane. "I rather suspect Dolorez Vincez is at the bottom of it."

"Oh, that reminds me, Red Head dear. Look out for that Dolorez. She is not what she pretends to be, and she is determined to steal our game from us to-morrow, so that her side will have the big battle with Breslin. I heard her say she would do it. Something about a little trick up her sleeve. And even Marian warned her. It was the other afternoon after practice—just as the girls carried me out. They—Marian and Dolorez—spoke a trifle louder than they thought, where they hid in the corner, sneering as I passed."

"I don't see what trick she could play."

"Oh, no, that's just it. We could not see. But watch her every minute, and then the trick may pop out. She's a wonderful player, by the way."

"Marvellous. I never saw a girl with such strength. She is foreign of course. That may account for it."

"Also she is older. That, too, may account for it. It looks to me as if friend Dolorez has had a lot of experience in basketball as well as in—gossip."

"But about Helen," Jane reverted. "What shall we do? She insists I shall absolutely say not a word to Mrs. Weatherbee, and yet the other girls are all hearing the foolish stuff. First, it was that I had adopted her. Then when that did not do enough mischief, they have it she is demented. That she plays out in the fields at all hours, and also that strange figures, like foreign men, haunt the campus, so that these timid little friends are afraid to go out after dark."

"Yes, I know. Since I have been invalided I have heard all sorts of rumors. I have even had girls come to me and demand that she be asked to leave college. These girls were not really spiteful, but they had been worked up to

such a state of fear by the other trouble makers. Imagine anyone following Helen here!"

"Judith, I never told you what made me change my mind so suddenly about taking the class presidency. It was that very afternoon of election, I overheard a conversation that persuaded me. Then, when they carried me off, and I felt if I followed my own sweet will, I would be abandoning you, to that sort of influence—then I gave in."

"Oh, I guessed that, Janey. And strange, I kept thinking all the while that you would. We all wanted you so badly, it did not seem possible we could be so sadly disappointed. But now, that you do hold the power of influence, you see how useful it is. What shall we do about Helen?"

"I can't bear to see the little freshies' fun all spoiled after all their hard work in putting together their great London melodrama," Jane said, "and I do not believe they will have any audience unless I make some announcement about Helen. Yet—she would never consent, I feel sure."

"Then why not do it without her knowledge? It is surely the lesser evil. I will do it, if you feel she might particularly blame you. She never

would suspect me of having sense enough to understand."

"Oh, thanks, Judy. But what is to be done I shall do. But to advertise Helen as the special attraction in the face of all this?"

"Exactly. That would make a tremendous hit." And Judith fairly blazed under the unfolding plan. "Don't you see, Janey, if we say she will be the star—the artist—the mad hatter or whatever else is her act, and if half of the crowd have heard all these ridiculous rumors, they will want to come to see—how wonderfully she does it."

Once started on the new plan Judith roared on like a car with disabled brakes. She simply could not quiet down. Jane shook her brilliant head all in vain. Judith was wildly enthused. The prospect of such a sensation as the freshman's play with the "real thing" in it, was too good to pass by.

"And then we will have a wonderful chance to prove what a good little scout Helen really is," she finally decided to reach a period for breath.

"But, Judith. To exploit little Helen. Don't you see how cruel it would be?"

"Why, no, goosey, I do not. I think it would

be more cruel to let her go on here, under this cloud, when such a whirlwind will blow it to the four corners, and evaporate it entirely. We have got to help her. You have said that yourself."

"Yes, I know, Judith. But it does seem to me—Oh, dear! Such a foolish snarl. And to think it is making the best little girl in Wellington miserable."

"Not the very best. Here is one pretty good!" And Judith risked the ankle in a loving limp over to Jane. "Lovey girl! I have not the slightest doubt but you will make a glorious halo out of the seeming smoky cloud. I can just about see Helen shining before this term is over."

"It is good of you to say so, Judith. You are my Guardian Angel, and always have the right sort of cheer in stock. What troubles me most just now is my own weak mind. I cannot make it up. I want to help the freshmen, of course, and I want to help Helen! How to do both with the one stone——"

"It simply is a case of pegging the stone hard enough. The aim is perfect," said Judith metaphorically. "Arrange a meeting as the official sling shot—and—let—it go——"

"Why, Judith! One would think you were on the publicity committee."

"Well, sister, if you were shut in here from all the fun, and only allowed out for the drives in forensics you would easily work up into 'high' yourself, and without extra gas either. I am all interested, not to say excited. I am sick and tired of that Marian getting the best end of everything, just because we are too goody-goody to fight her."

"Oh, Judy, it isn't that we are cowards——"

"No, I did not mean that, Jane. I know you would as soon lasso a wild cowboy as shoot a basket. But it is all in the way we look at it. They—the Marians don't."

Jane could not help smiling. Judith was pushing hard to win her point, and the matter of mere words was inconsequential.

"But Judith, the real trouble is—we don't know ourselves why Helen acts—so queerly——"

"That has nothing to do with this crazy business. She is perfectly sane, and sound as any girl here!" quickly defended Judith.

"Oh, yes, Judy. I do not mean on the matter of her health. I refer to the way she is always—sort of hiding, and so afraid of strangers. Why does she do that?" the deep frown of vexation clouded Jane's pretty face.

"Of course, Jane, that is queer. But we have

her as our special—friend," Judith did not say "charge," "and we are going to see her through. I don't claim to have more brains than you have, but I just want to support yours. I believe we should agree with the freshmen, assist them with their play, by notifying all the classes that Helen the virtuoso, will play original music. This should put the quietus on the gossip, and incidentally constitute a big ad for the show."

Jane rested her pretty head in her hands. Even for one schooled in school troubles, the settling of this perplexity assumed baffling proportions.

Finally she looked up with an expression of decision. Judith smiled expectantly.

"All right, Judy. We will call the meeting and make the announcement. Helen has agreed to take part in the play, and we have no reason—apparently—to think she would object to having her part in the program announced. Of course, I shall be careful to announce the entire program."

"Oh, you angel child! Woe is me that my ankle prohibits a jig!" and Judith flung her arms around Jane—Jane regained in apparent happiness and good nature.

CHAPTER XXII

JANE ALLEN: CENTER

THE day of the final practice game—that which was to decide which team would have the honor to play the Breslins, found every member of all teams fairly quivering with anticipation.

Jane, Judith, Dozia and Drusilla held a little preliminary meeting at which the team's respective places were arranged. Judith, still incapacitated, was to serve as a scorer, and Norma Travers to take her place as forward.

"I am not afraid of any one but Dolorez Vincez," remarked the ever-wise Drusilla. "She has a form all her own."

"Yes, Dol is a wonderful player," agreed Jane. "I wonder where she got such fine training."

"She never speaks of her former school," Dozia commented with a meaning not specified in her actual words.

"What do you mean, Dozia? Have you an idea there is a dark mystery, in the former school days, of the dashing Dol?" asked Jane.

"I would not be surprised if that just about described it, Janey," said Dozia with a wag of her "roped" head. Dozia's braids were the pride of her classmates, and the despair of Dozia. They were wonderful braids, like the milkmaids of old, and in color a challenging brown. Judith gave them that shade.

"Mercy me!" exclaimed Judith. "Pray, we do not stumble on any more mysteries or our athletics may as well be shelved. It seems to me this year is mostly squabbles and mysteries."

"Well, I did not intend to say anything about it," confided Dozia. "But I am sure, there is something more than queer about Dolorez. Naturally, one hates so to take exception to the girls who are foreigners. It always looks like prejudice."

"Yes, that is the way I feel," said Jane. "But I have noticed Dolorez runs out a lot after dark, and just when the rest of us are busy at books. I heard her remark a couple of times she was hurrying to catch the mailman, but it seems strange she should so often be late with her letters."

"Yes, and did you notice she does not come back quickly?" Dozia asked significantly.

"Oh, well, let us leave Dol to her own troubles. We have enough of our own for this afternoon," suggested Jane. "I guess we have everything arranged. Judith, your limp is perfectly fetching, just needs a stick and an eyeglass."

"Mean thing! When you sprain your throat I shall offer gum drops," flashed back Judith.

As a basketball team the girls were first-class noise makers, and if there were any other ways of racketing than those operated, Bedlam itself must have held the copyright.

For this, the final tryout, the great gym was crowded with spectators, as well as with the units of the various teams. Teams One and Two were to play for place, and that place was to take up the big game with the Breslins—the event of greatest importance in the whole basketball season.

The players of most interest were the centers: Jane and Drusilla played center for Team One, and Marian and Dolorez occupied the ring for Team Two. Jane was jumping center and Marian her opponent.

Little confusion resulted from the application of the new rules, and nothing of spectacular in-

terest occurred until the end of the first half. Then two fouls were called simultaneously—and both on Dolorez Vincez. She had grabbed Minette by the shoulders just as Minette was making a goal, and the next foul came on top of that, called on the same Dolorez, who executed another particularly rough play in which Jane went to the floor. For a moment after this accident there was a standstill—then taking advantage of the foul called, Drusilla caged the ball making the second point, and winning the goal Jane had tried for.

"That was a trick," whispered Judith to Isobel Talmadge, a referee. "I saw her deliberately put her foot out."

"I have my eye on that lady," answered Isobel. "That is not the only trick she has tried this afternoon."

With a tie at the first half the interest waxed to a seething point, and the whistle blew for the last twenty minutes. Every girl seemed in such fine form and exercised such agility that a grand climax was promised when the tie should be broken.

Happy, smiling, good natured and expectant, both teams made a picture the faculty of Wellington had cause to take pride in, and whichever

of these teams would win out as first, the second surely would hold a place of high standing.

From the lofts, and over the rails, the older girls were unconsciously climbing to dangerous edges, in the utter disregard of roped-in limits for spectators, and more than one grad, and undergrad had taken and offered such innocent bets as flowers and fudge on the possible winner of the second half.

A fumble made by Marian cost the Twos a point, when a foul committed by Norma Travers of Jane's team evened them up again, without either side making a basket.

Time after time the big spherical ball was directly in front of the elusive basket only to be dashed back by an alert opponent.

"Good work!" called the crowd, as Jane tossed the ball clear into the end field, taking advantage of her privilege as center to run from one field to another. The throw had been made from the one bounce allowed, and that she had been able to take in all the privileges occasioned a sensational play.

Cheer after cheer rang out, then came the expectant silence. Some one must "shoot a basket" soon, or the crowd would suffocate from pent-up excitement.

Two more fouls gave each side a free throw, but nowhere near the basket came the much-abused ball.

Finally the ball was in center, Jane jumped for it, pushed it to the floor to comply with that rule, and just as she raised it to throw it with straight aim for the player near the basket, Dolorez waved her hand in Jane's face!

"Foul!" shouted the referee, and "Shame!" roared the crowd.

"Disqualified!" came the sentence from the referee, and Dolorez was compelled to leave the floor. She had been charged with four personal fouls, thus disqualifying her for more play, but in spite of this unenviable record she did not leave the floor without a protest.

Marian, quick to realize that a word from her to an official, when only the captain should speak, might turn her out as well as Dolorez, promptly substituted Tony Dexter, but it was too late. The foul allowed Jane's side gave the free throw needed and into the basket went the ball for Wellington. That settled it.

"Jane Allen, Center!" went up a wild wonderful shout. The tie was broken, the game won for Team One, and Jane Allen became official Center for the season of 1920.

"You were by all odds the best player," said Isobel Talmadge, when quiet had almost been restored, and the players regained something of a normal condition. "But what appeared to be real stategy on Marian's team, quickly developed into tricks, all of which measured up for fouls. I am going to call a meeting of the Athletic Board soon. There is something about Dolorez playing not found on school teams. I wouldn't be surprised if she has been something of a professional."

"Oh, you can't mean it!" breathed Jane. "She is older obviously, but how could she be a professional?"

"Oh, very easily, little girl. But you have won your honors fairly and I congratulate you. We will have a record, after our Breslin Day this year, I am quite sure."

"Thank you," said Jane simply. Judith was tugging at her sleeve and Drusilla dragging at the other arm.

"Oh, come on. The seniors have a spread for us. Such real coffee and sandwiches. Isn't that splendid?" asked Judith, smacking her lips. "But not half as good as our victory at that. Jane, aren't you too proud to walk? Shan't we carry you?"

"Yes, let's!" roared the surrounding girls, and in spite of protests and appeals, Jane was raised to shoulders, then quickly carried to the far end of the gym where the spread was "cast."

It was a good-natured crowd that surrounded the improvised tables, and even the losers took their defeat in the proper spirit, all but Marian and Dolorez. They had left the gym.

"What was the matter with that old basket?" asked the good-natured Tony Dexter. "I was waiting all afternoon for a chance to sub, and just when I got it, 'whoop' in went the ball into the net."

"Yes, and when I all but tucked it in its little bed, it tumbled out," sighed Ted Guthrie comically.

"Anyway, I had two bounces and one dribble, that makes a nice little record for my home report. I love to say I dribbled, sounds so cute and baby like. Makes mama think I am cutting my eye teeth," supplemented the big, clumsy Drusilla Landers, who was so big it was a joke for her to talk of baby and teeth.

"Eat, children! Eat! For to-morrow we starve," commanded Constance Lipton, a grad. "Jane, here is a sandwich made expressly for Center. See its pretty curve?"

"Oh, it tastes good all around too," added Jane, munching the tid-bit all around, making a circle to outline center. "I love them this way."

"That's just always the way it is," wailed little Clare Bradley. "When a girl gets popular she receives all the honors. Jane Allen is over subscribed—that is what Daddy calls it in the Liberty Loans."

Everybody roared at pretty little Clare's definition of Jane's popularity. To be over-subscribed in honors!

"I'll admit I have more than my share!" Jane replied, "but then you see, my second had to go and hurt her ankle. Otherwise she might have made that big throw."

"Oh, never!" protested Judith. "If I saw that basket waiting for my ball, I would have been stage struck, and ducked. I tell you, Janie, you looked like all the cowboys when you made that throw. I'll wager you had in mind my particular Fedario. Girls, you should see my Fedario! He's the handsomest, blackest, wildest cowboy—with the most wonderful skill at his ropes."

"Oh, of course," yelled Weasie Blair. "Janey ought to be best at basketball. Think of her cowboy training."

"And the baskets the Indians make!" supplemented Gloria Gude.

"And the great big balls that come with the hail storms," Ted Guthrie drawled out foolishly. "I believe if I were brought up in the hills of Montana I could play anything from hookey to bean bag."

A deluge of scraps and crumbs put an end to Ted's wit. As it was, she had a blouse pocket full of coffee, and she bore up with at least one ear full of cookey crumbs.

"But where is Helen?" asked Dickey Ripple between munches of real bread, and nibs at a soda biscuit. "Haven't seen her in eons."

"Oh, she was in during the battle," Jane made answer. "But Nellie is at something new in music, and she simply cannot tear herself away from that fiddle."

"Just the same," objected Weasie Blair, "she might take time to celebrate. The Uppercuts don't often blow us to a feed like this."

"We accept the compliment," responded Isobel Talmadge. "I have been wondering why someone has not seen fit to say the eating was good."

This brought forth such a storm of compliments, given in chorus without very much har-

mony, that the Uppercuts, as the freshmen call the upper class girls, finally begged for mercy.

"And what became of Marian?" asked Mildred Jennings. "Seems to me all played well enough to be patted on the back, even if Team One did win out."

"Indeed you did," Jane quickly replied, "and I hope Marian will come in and test the lovely spread. Naturally she felt badly about Dolorez. I can't see why Dol rushed football tactics in."

The moment she made the remark Jane regretted it. She had not intended to refer to Dolorez's disqualification. And now she had brought attention directly to it.

The hum of subdued voices plainly agreed with Jane in their arguments.

Marian should have stood her ground and helped her team celebrate, if not victory, then defeat!

"Well, it is no news to have Jane for Center," spoke up Gloria Gude, when the Marian incident had been disposed of. "We knew she would be center, ever since the term opened. Who else made a record anything like hers of last year?"

"Of course," chimed in Grazia. "Jane is born Center. She knows just when to jump—I

wouldn't wonder if she jumps in her sleep, eh, Jane?"

"Now, girls, you all know as well as I do that there is plenty of splendid basketball talent sitting right here at this table. And the fact that you have made me Center——"

"Means merely that you are the one best, dandy, all around Center we could choose," interrupted Dorothy Blyden. "Three cheers for Jane Allen, Center!"

"Hip-hip-hoorah!" and the echo shook the rafters.

Then came the epidemic of:

"I know a girl and her name is Jane," etc.

"Say, girls," moaned Jane, when throats gave in and the shouts ceased, "if there is any way of getting a name changed without paying income tax on the change, I think I'll apply. You all know that girl whose name is Jane——"

Came the—

"A reebald—a ribald—reebald, ribald rum!
Wellington! Wellington! Sis boom—ah—
Wellington! Wellington! Rah! Rah! Rah!"

CHAPTER XXIII

THE BARN SWIFTS—A TRAGEDY

"AND now for the Barn Swifts."

"Everyone is crazy to come, Dickey. I'm afraid we will have an overflow."

"Oh, yes, of course. I suppose Nell will completely douse all the rest of us. That's the way with foolish college girls. First they cut and then they plaster."

"Now, Dickey, you know you are Nell's best friend."

"That's just it. I am and have always been her friend. I know a thoroughbred when I see one, but these other folks," and Dickey made a gesture of disgust. "They make me tired. I heard Toney and Tim planning to give her flowers."

"You did?"

"Yes, I did."

"Then, Dick, we must be careful. Such a manifestation as flowers spells—trouble."

"What do you mean, Clare?"

"I mean that Toney and Tim are Marian's best workers, and when they fall to our side with flowers! Look out!"

"I am willing to take a chance with anyone but Dolorez Vincez, and must admit she is too much for us."

"I think you are right, Dicky duck. But how do I look? Like my wings?"

"Wonderful. But the left is a big scough-gee! There, that's better. What do you think of the shawl? I borrowed it from Maggie and promised to return it without getting the folds out—an utter impossibility."

They were almost dressed for the big event—the Barn Swifts' show. As hinted at, the scene was laid in London, but more than that could not be even hinted at—it would all come out in the Barn. Troups of freshmen trooped—no other word would describe the going back and forth to the big barn—all afternoon and now, that it was almost time for the curtain to go up, a silence, formidable in its import, settled on the stretch of road leading to the gaily lighted auditorium commonly known as the Barn.

Every seat had been taken, and as Clare anticiticipated, an overflow was imminent. Faculty, grads, undergrads, and all the sororities turned out in full force, to do credit to the inspired freshmen, and that a real artist, Helen Powderly, would render "original compositions, including the famous "Wellington Sonata" added not a little zest to the promised program.

As a curtain raiser Weasie Blair made some announcements. These included one for the Flippers' Pop-Corn Sale, another for a Musicale to be given in aid of the Shut-ins, a call to arms —which translated meant that such girls as had any of the War Samplers, being finished for the Mirabile Dictu, would please send them in by Wednesday. The obsequies over, Weasie bowed prettily, and the real show proceeded.

Janet Clark played beautifully—some martial music on the old square piano, the same piano standing up remarkably under the strain of use, of ill use, and catalogue changes. A second curtain reluctantly hitched itself up, revealing the stage setting—improvised wilds of London—if there be any such, the scenes all carefully laid in discarded wall paper, and strips of nondescript table oilcloth. The idea was all right—but the detail a little sketchy.

Applause was easier to obtain than dramatic action, and what ever the latter failed the former supplied.

Dickey Ripple, in Maggie's shawl, made a very pathetic picture, sitting by the wet roadside, with great snowflakes fluttering down. It was Janet Clark's task to take care of the snowstorm, as she had only to perform on the piano otherwise, and Janet was never known to be accurate. Consequently her storm was heavy—too heavy for snow. More like an avalanche, and the paper flakes at times acted as if some one had ground out the motto slips from the upper flies. Nevertheless the effect was thrilling, and Dickey in the snow brought forth rapturous applause.

To the rescue came tripping a bevy of Barn Swifts. Even the most critical could find little to complain of in that ballet. The piano and violin (Helen played behind the scenes now)—this music inspired the sprites rhythmically and when finally they danced around, surrounding Dickey, and carrying her off to the woodlands, the house "went mad," as Gloria Gude expressed it.

More London scenes of trials and trouble, pathetic and miserable, the story not the acting, then came the climax!

A real little chimney sweep, a ragged urchin, made "his" awful way down the chimney (a slide cased in around the old brick fireplace) and after the wildest, weirdest strains of music (Helen at her best) the urchin came down—down until finally he landed in a very dim light, all huddled up close to the big, ramshackle chimney.

There should have been applause—the work deserved it, still the house was silent—spellbound. Not a hand clapped!

Weirdly the violin strains wailed and wafted the plaint of the inspired, yet mad Chimney Swift! This was the original music, this was the much talked of star act of Helen Powderly, the promising artist of Europe, the little freshman who was delaying her musical studies to obtain a correct knowledge of English.

Now the entire scene changed. It was no longer a school girls' amateur comedy, but a performance of such musical merit as Wellington had never before discovered among her own students.

When the plaint was finished, and the violin slipped down under the pile of leaves and brambles, Helen's face could not be seen, so dim was the light. She had insisted on that sombre accompaniment.

For a few moments everyone waited, then one of the faculty ventured to start the applause.

Instantly the tumult amounted to an ovation. Jane and Judith were breathless and allowed everyone else to do the applauding, while they wondered.

That was really Helen! She had composed that sighing, wailing, moaning strain out in the trees, when she caught the tune of the winds.

They knew!

But the students would not now be satisfied, and Helen was obliged to respond to an encore. Trite as is that statement, it expresses the fact, and Helen did finally respond.

When she stepped out to the edge of the platform she revealed herself the true artist. Not the absurd rags, nor the comic make-up hid the personality of Helka Podonsky. The very manner of that graceful bow, the splendid tilt of her pretty curly head and above all the way she carried and caressed her violin proclaimed her the artist.

For an encore she played the "Wellington Etude." This was the composition advertised, and it fully bore out the promised merit.

When finally after the last note, like a bit of

spun glass, blew its way to the heaven of true sounds, again came the thunderous applause.

"Just as I expected," groaned Dickey Ripple. "We won't be able to go on with the drama."

"Oh, yes, we will. She will not play another note, not if they take the rafters down, and as soon as the audience discovers that, they will quit," appeased Weasie.

"Oh, they're giving her flowers!" whispered Clare, her eye to the peephole. "An usher just brought a big bunch!"

Helen could be seen accepting the flowers. She bowed gracefully, then glanced at the dangling card. The next moment she had dropped the flowers to the floor, and she stood there, like one transfixed!

Everyone saw what happened! When Helen read the card she dropped the flowers!

There was a breathless pause. Finally a timid clap came like a signal from Jane's chair. Helen glanced over, recovered herself and with a murmur of apology regained her flowers.

But not before the mischief had been done.

Everyone wanted to know what was written on that card, and the remainder of the Barn Swifts' performance went by the wayside. The tragic little incident had stirred the audience to

evident curiosity, and whispers broke out ruthlessly at the most thrilling moments.

Applause was sounded where the audience should have wept, and when Gloria spoke the most dramatic line of the whole plot, when tears should have burst from eyes and sighs escaped from trembling lips, some one cheered!

"Awful!" moaned Dickey, the coach.

Unsteadily Helen came within the "flies" a little pale, but smiling and hugging her roses. She was instantly surrounded by a crowd, too overcome to really offer compliments, but the way they caressed her with their eyes told the story.

Helen had made the Barn Swifts famous, and what matter about drivelling drama!

When eventually the audience stirred, Mrs. Weatherbee succeeded in reaching Jane, and was now talking to her in a serious tone.

"I had no idea of her genius," the directress said. "She has a positive gift. She should not be wasting her precious time here in commonplace English."

"Yes, I know, Mrs. Weatherbee," Jane faltered. "But she wants so much to acquire a knowledge of our language. And Helen is still very young."

"Oh, I realize that, my dear, but she is—an artist. She has given all a wonderful treat. Tell her to drop in the office to see me, when she is composed again. I fancy the whole matter made her a little nervous. She dropped her flowers, as if frightened for a moment."

"Yes, I noticed that," said Jane foolishly. As if everyone had not "noticed that."

Out in the lane, a bypath that wound round to the campus houses, Marian Seaton and Dolorez Vincez were tramping along, arm in arm, minds working in a strain of peculiar satisfaction.

"I knew that would get her," said Dolorez.

"Yes, wasn't it perfectly tragic!" exclaimed Marian.

"Great!" declared the other, less choice with her expression than was Marian. "I would not have missed that for a farm."

"The effect was certainly very startling. Yet she did recover herself. What a wonderful player she is! How ever did she learn all that in her scant years?"

"Born that way," tritely contributed Dolorez. "One doesn't have to learn—talent."

"I suppose not. But how wonderful it is. Why was not I born that way, as you say?

Think what talent would mean to me?" this with a sigh.

"Oh, come, Molly," and Dolorez wrapt her arm more tightly around the velvet cloak. "You have talent. What about all that money we are going to make?"

"Hush, Dol! The girls passing might hear you."

"What if they did?"

"Oh, I wouldn't for the world!"

"Pray, why not?" with a show of indignation.

"We never talk of making money at Wellington," said Marian, when a group of passing girls faded out of earshot.

"I don't see why not. I am sure less important things are talked of," persisted the tantalizing Dolorez.

"But, Dol, you don't seem to understand. We all have a rating here, and we could not get here without it. We are not in the money-making class—not that such are inferior to us," Marian hastened to add, "but because our social standing is supposed to be fixed outside of trade."

A grating, mocking laugh followed this explanation. Evidently Dolorez Vincez had no such notion of correct social standing. She was plainly getting on Marian's nerves.

"I hope we will not get into trouble on account of to-night's affair," Marian said. "I really begin to fear trouble," she sighed again.

Another mocking titter answered this.

"Good thing then, Molly, that you have me to fall back on. Cold feet are very unhealthy."

Even the callous Marian shrank away from that. Dolorez was forgetting herself and "reverting to type," as Marian expressed it.

Jane and Judith talked little, but thought much. They had detached themselves from the more noisy element, with a determination to get Helen and escort her safely to her little house with Dickey, and Weasie; this was their ulterior motive; they also wanted quiet.

Judith was strong for Helen, and her enthusiasm grew as the moments passed. They waited for some time at the stage door, ran around to all other doors (Jane did, Judith still limped) yet Helen had not been discovered. Just now Jane was peeping in a window, through which a torn shade allowed a view of the interior. This was the annex used for dressing.

"Where can she be?" asked Jane again.

"Didn't Dickey see her?" questioned Judith.

"Not since she left the stage door. She said she was going over here to get her things."

"May be home in bed by now. Good sense if she is."

"I hardly think so. Wait! I'll slip in through the window. The door is locked."

Judith resigned herself to an old stump while Jane "slipped in." She waited some moments then knocked for Jane.

"Can't lose her as well," commented the tired junior. "Jane, why don't you come along?" she called lightly.

Then Jane opened the door. She had an arm around a shrinking little form, that even under the heavy cloak could be seen to tremble.

"It's only Judith," whispered Jane. "Come on, Helen. I won't let anyone see you. You are just too scared to speak. Poor little dear." Judith was too surprised to speak. Also she sensed Helen had one of her nervous spells, and very prudently Judith wrapt her arm around the shaking figure, and together the three trudged along to the Ivy Nook, the campus house of Helen's lodgings.

CHAPTER XXIV

A CLUE TO THE MYSTERY

"MRS. WEATHERBEE would like to see you, Miss Allen." This summons from Molly the hall girl, aroused Jane from a somewhat disconnected reverie—if deep thinking on a dark subject might be so termed. Jane was occupied with Marian and Dolorez, and wondering what they had done to that bunch of roses, now known to have been contributed by them to Helen at the Barn Swifts' playlet. What was written on that tiny card that worked such unpleasant mischief?

"Very well, Molly. I shall go to the office at once," replied Jane, rousing herself and suiting her action to the words.

Mrs. Weatherbee's scholarly face was inscrutable, and gave no hint of the purport of her call for Jane. She smiled, but she always did that,

and she was very cordial, but likewise, she was always that.

Jane was naturally apprehensive when she returned the smile and took the chair offered.

"Miss Allen, I am somewhat disturbed," began the directress. "Since the beginning of the term I have endeavored to keep my official hands off the girls' affairs, except as they relate directly to the school work, but I wonder now, if that has not been somewhat of a mistake."

"I hope that I have not been instrumental in effecting that regime, Mrs. Weatherbee, if it has been a mistake," Jane quickly offered.

"Oh, no, not that. I liked your spirit when you took the class presidency, and pledged your efforts to avoid the usual squabbles getting into the hands of the faculty; but even so good a plan may be abused."

Jane wanted to plunge into the heart of the trouble, whatever it might be, at once. This being polite and beating around the bush, always vexed her. But it was the way with the faculty.

"May I know to what you refer, Mrs. Weatherbee?" Jane asked in the most respectful tone.

"Yes, my dear, certainly. I have brought you here to tell you that precisely." She smoothed

out the blotter and patted a few papers—anything, Jane thought, to kill time.

Mrs. Weatherbee asked finally, "What do you know about this plan of Marian Seaton's and Dolorez Vincez to canvass the college to get customers for the so-called beauty shop someone is opening at the very gate of our grounds?"

"Why, Mrs. Weatherbee! I know absolutely nothing about it. In fact, I have not even heard it mentioned before!" Jane almost gasped.

"I am glad to hear you say so. I felt you wouldn't have allowed such an unheard of thing to get hold without coming to me."

"Indeed, I would not," said Jane seriously. She still gasped.

"As you are class president, I naturally asked you first, as we always feel it better to allow the girls a chance to develop their own plans, where such a privilege is possible. But to have young ladies actually go about the rooms, and get names for beauty parlors!"

The contempt in Mrs. Weatherbee's voice spoke louder than did her words. She was plainly very much "disturbed" as she had previously admitted.

"I should think all the old class girls would be well aware that the matter of canvassing is

strictly prohibited," Jane said. "And for such a thing as a beauty parlor!" Here she, too, felt the situation beyond words. She seemed to vision the girls running out of the grounds at every recreation to get another daub of enamel, or a quick dip of hair dye. What a situation such an opportunity would precipitate! Also the fact that Dolorez' black hair was streaked, and that her high color was not always reliable, flashed across Jane's mind. This had been Dolorez' doings, she felt convinced.

"I agree with you," Mrs. Weatherbee replied. "No girl in Wellington for any length of time could have committed such an error unconsciously. I therefore feel that Miss Vincez must be more to blame than Miss Seaton."

"I now recall," Jane amended, "hearing some talk about making a lot of money (Dolorez had said a "pot of money") but I had no idea to what this referred."

"Yes, they had it all settled. Little slips of paper were typewritten and the girls pledged—actually pledged, to take the so-called treatments. And they were to pay a part of the charge in advance to start the parlor. Did you ever hear of anything so absurd?"

Jane shook her head to deny ever having heard

of anything so absurd. She was thinking too rapidly to trust herself to words.

"Of course, I shall have to bring both girls before the board," said Mrs. Weatherbee. "I am convinced that they alone are to blame."

"Might it be possible," suggested Jane, "that Dolorez is ignorant of our rules as regards business?"

"I think not. She has simply wound Miss Seaton around her fingers. Miss Vincez is a girl of unusual experience. Her standing was investigated, but I am afraid we allowed personal influence to overcome good judgment. Miss Vincez was formerly a pupil-teacher at Blindwood."

"A pupil-teacher!" exclaimed Jane. "Then that accounts for her basketball skill?"

"Exactly. She taught athletics."

"And she presumed to play with school girls," exclaimed Jane indignantly.

"Yes, but we have our official eye on her," Mrs. Weatherbee said rather hurriedly, for Mrs. Weatherbee. "We would not have allowed her to use her so-called skill against our legitimate players, in fact, when she was disqualified for fouls, in your tryout, she then and there was notified she could not again play in any of the games,

or take part in any of the athletic contests. We have no objection to her enjoying all the exercises, that is her right, but she is disqualified as a professional, from all amateur sports."

Jane was too surprised for utterance. That a teacher should stand up in their games and try "to best" a set of whole-hearted young school girls!

"I would not allow this to become public, as such occurrences would have an unwholesome effect on the morale of the school," Mrs. Weatherbee went on. "But I knew it would filter through. Such sensations always do get abroad —like steam or smoke; we can't control the influence."

"But Blindwood!" Jane now repeated. "Wasn't that where—Helen went to school?"

"Yes," replied the directress, "Helen was a pupil there also."

"Then that accounts——" Jane hesitated. "Why, I wonder, did Helen not recognize Dolorez?"

"They meet very seldom, and Miss Vincez has changed. She may have been a charter customer at her wonderful beauty parlor for as I am informed from Blindwood, Miss Vincez there was a striking blonde."

"Oh, that is it! She has changed her hair!" Jane could not refrain from exclaiming. "And she knows Helen, and knows her real name of course. Oh, Mrs. Weatherbee, I am sure Dolorez Vincez was responsible for that shock Helen received with the bouquet. Whatever was written on the little card simply shocked Helen out of her senses."

"Precisely," replied Mrs. Weatherbee. "But I have not questioned Helen. I believe the child is on the verge of a nervous collapse, and however kindly we would go about it, a word might be more than she could stand. She is so high strung and temperamental. I have even had her excused from many lessons, believing that the best plan. Helen will do all she can to meet her obligations, and there is no reason why she should be driven."

"Oh, Mrs. Weatherbee!" and impulsively Jane threw her arms around the woman who stood as mother to the Wellington girls. "How good, and kind you are!"

"Thank you, my dear. Such gratitude more than repays me. I sometimes fear my necessary intervention may be taken as interference. But when I have done my duty, and all turns out well then—I am glad."

"What can I do to assist you in this matter, Mrs. Weatherbee?" asked Jane earnestly.

"My dear, all I want you to do is to use your influence privately with the young ladies, to show them the absurdity of subscribing to anything like that so-called course of treatments. You see, the danger is, some of them may actually have given their money, and we cannot force Miss Vincez' friend—whoever she may be—to refund it. However, under any conditions, I shall not allow a single Wellington girl to visit this place—this beauty parlor."

"I will gladly do all I can, Mrs. Weatherbee, to counteract the canvass. I wish I had heard of it sooner. But there has been so much going on lately. And being anxious about our big basketball game, I have been keeping the girls at practice daily."

"Oh, yes, my dear, and that is quite right. I do not want to spoil your pretty head with compliments, but you must know that we all appreciate what you are doing. Your leadership for the juniors has given us perfectly splendid results this far."

"Thank you, Mrs. Weatherbee. But really I am only doing what anyone would do, and I feel rather foolish to be complimented. It is just

a case of being in line. Someone has to lead."

"That is a fine spirit to view it in, Jane," Mrs. Weatherbee never used first names—that is, seldom indeed. The occasion must have been one of singular confidence. "But we recall that you did not fall into this place without well-deserved merit," she commented. "This is a big college and we have many fine girls, so that those chosen to lead must have been qualified. However, I want to say a word about our little Helen. She surprised me greatly with her wonderful skill at the violin. You know when she came to us, she had been sort of lost—that is, her friends had abandoned her."

"Yes, Mrs. Weatherbee," said Jane simply, choking back her interest.

"Well, I have thought since we might have traced them by their letters, which must have been in the possession of the Blindwood faculty. But I was restrained from doing this by the attitude of Helen herself. She fairly begged me not to seek her friends. Strange, I thought."

"I have found her the same with every line I attempted to uncover in her interest," said Jane. "But why she is so fearful of being discovered I cannot guess. Still, she is so sweet, and gentle, and I felt we might surely regard her

wishes. After all, we have no dealings with her friends. She has proven her worth and she is our —guest. So I have almost decided, Mrs. Weatherbee, as far as I am concerned, Helen may remain our mysterious orphan. You must have heard the absurd story about my having adopted her."

"Yes, that was the first inkling I had of these foolish tales. But it was so very foolish it died by its own hand. However, as you say, my dear, we have only to deal with Helen, and she is beyond reproach, so for the present at least, I quite agree with you. We have no reason to bother about her antecedents. Now run along. And be wise. Don't take too many into your confidence. You may trust Judith. I am sure. I am beginning to think of you as do the girls. I hear them call you the Two Jays."

This playful thrust enlivened Jane and struck a responsive chord in her rather drooping spirits. It would be good to confide in Judy, at least she, Jane thought, was human enough to enjoy the beauty parlor joke with her chum.

And wouldn't Judy just howl!

CHAPTER XXV

TO THE VICTORS

"WHOOPEE! Red Head! My ankle is as good as new, and I am going to be in the big game. Now let the Breslins beware!"

"Are you sure, Judith, it is entirely well? You know ankles have a way of kinking up unexpectedly," Jane warned.

"To tell the truth, Janey, I have been petting it a bit. I have not been sick since I had the mumps, and it was adorable to have the girls holding my hands, and looking into my eyes. I really think it is a lot nicer to have a 'busted' ankle than two trustworthy pedals. Except, of course, when we have the Breslins to whitewash. Then, I like to take a shot at the fun."

"You are an incorrigible fraud, Judy, but I am glad to have you with us to-day. I may not

look it, but I am very human, almost to the point of being stage struck before a crowd. Now, when I jump there in center I rather feel as if I am going up to the gallery, and I want to stay and watch the game, from a point of vantage. But, I'll follow the ball and do my best," with an appropriate sigh.

"We are not worried about your nerves, Jane. You may have a set, but they are beautifully padded—as the health books require. Just look at that" (bending Jane's arm up muscle tight). "Why, I believe you could take up boxing, and make a wonderful record at the biff, bang, biff. Think I would like that sport myself," and without warning, Judith undertook a "biff, bang, biff" that sent things flying about the room.

"Now sit down like a nice little girl and I will tell you the most delectable news," coaxed Jane. "I have had an interview with the Weatherbee!"

"Oh, lovely! Who's going to be expelled?"

"Not quite that bad. But rather serious, Judy, I won't keep you on tenderhooks. Dolorez Vincez is a professional woman athlete! She taught at Blindwood!"

"She did! She did!" and Judith fairly exhaled surprise. "The detestable thing! To come down on us like that, and try to bamboosle us out of

the game! Oh, now I know why I suddenly developed a liking for boxing," and out went the windmill arms again.

"Be serious, Judith! Mrs. Weatherbee advised me to talk to you——"

"Mrs. Weatherbee is a brilliant woman——"

"All right, Judith," with an injured air. "If I must talk through a wall of nonsense, I may as well desist."

"Oh, Janey, dear, I am all ears. I want to know every last word. How did the Weatherbee find her out?"

Jane reviewed the case as she had received the information, and presently the athletic phase being disposed of, she reached the beauty parlor episode. Judith gasped, and all but gagged during the recital of this exciting news. Her exclamations apropos of the possibilities in hair changes knew no bounds, as the freshmen might say, and when it was finally brought out that Dolorez' hair had undergone the operation of a change from black to yellow, and back again via peroxide R.R. Judith turned a well-balanced somersault, to prove there was absolutely nothing further the matter with her ankle.

"I saw one of the pledge cards," Judith recalled, when Jane remarked it was queer so much

could have been planned without the facts reaching the ears of herself or Judith. "I saw a typewritten page, and I guessed from the errors that Marian had something to do with it. She cannot type any more than she can knit."

"And here is where you come in Judy. You and I are to do all we can to undo that canvass," referring to the work of Dolorez in soliciting customers for the beauty parlor. "You see, some of the new girls may think it perfectly all right to do as they see fit with their own money, in their own time, and outside of school grounds. They do not know the penalty of commercializing the college. Now, we will have to work quietly, and wisely. We must make it known in some way, that the faculty will not allow any of the girls to frequent that shop. Of course, when the promoters find that out, likely they will pull up stakes and not open up the beauty parlor."

"Then I cannot be made over! Oh, Jane! Be kind! Think what I shall miss. All my life I have dreamed of waking up red headed, and now, just when the possibility creeps to my pillow——"

"Judy Stearns, come into the gym and work that off. I see no other help for such a condition as that you are suffering from. We will never

beat the Breslins, while your mind wanders to beauty regions. Come along. I am going to limber you up myself," and thus ended the chums' conference.

A few hours later, with Team One in the place of honor on the best car within commandeering distance, it seemed all Wellington was on the road to Breslin.

It was late in November, and the afternoon was perfect in its riotous beauty. Enough wind, plenty of sunshine, a cyclone of late oak leaves, and crisp, dry frosty air!

In the same picture, carloads of happy, healthy girls, cheering and yelling their class and college cries, laughing and singing intermittently to the tune of chugging motors.

Rooting for Wellington all the way over the hills, and then through the winding roads out to the second school for girls, Breslin, there to meet and presumably vanquish the lusty foe at basket-ball.

"We approach the conflict with optimism," said Jane grandly, at the risk of a buffeting shower of "whacks" for attempting anything as vague as mere optimism.

Always a red letter day at Wellington, the meeting with the Breslins on this particular oc-

casion possessed the additional interest of being the deciding game in a school championship.

"I saw the great, big, strong right forward of the Breslin to-day, Jane," Drusilla Landers remarked apprehensively, "and I fear we have a real foe to fight in her muscle and stride. She is so tall, and so long, and so——"

"She would have to be something else besides tall and long to outdo our windmill," said Jane, referring to Drusilla's particular arm sweep. "I am counting on your arms to toss that ball into the basket more times than the Breslins can count."

"Oh, woe is me! I may wave—not too near a face, or I may wag not too near a line, but to shoot baskets with my windmills—Jane dear, help me out and make it dribbles. I adore dribbles." Drusilla was now bouncing up and down with the auto motion, "doing the short hills" in the famous on high record of the well-tried Wellington seven passenger.

"Our chauffeur, one Thomas, has little regard for basketball conditions," Judith remarked. "Just then he registered a bumper on my pet ankle."

"But Tom is out to get there," Jane insisted.

"He knows we play at three thirty, and I have promised he can see the game."

"What! A man see us play!" screamed Clarisse Bradley.

"Pray why not?" asked Jane. "Are we not good enough players?"

"Oh, yes, but——"

"But the bloomers, and things, eh, Clare?" joked Norma Travers. "To my overstrained mind, it seems really pathetic that we can or have to call in the very chauffeur to view the exhibition —I mean the game," she corrected archly.

"Yes, indeed. I think we should have a real public game, with everyone invited," Jane declared. "Here we are! Now everyone must take care of her own traps. We don't want the Breslins criticising our personal deportment, or our practical application of domestic science."

Tumbling out of the cars the Wellingtons and their guests were met and welcomed by the Breslins at the great gate, with its inviting arch leading into the beautiful grounds surrounding the exclusive school, variously designated as seminary and college.

That a conflict was imminent between the guests and their hosts seemed difficult to realize,

such giggling, chattering and such volumes of sounds, without words, as were charged and surcharged, through the atmosphere.

"Some day our psychologists will investigate the mysteries of school girl noise," predicted Mrs. Weatherbee to Miss Rutledge, "and I expect the finding will be of immense interest to those who have to listen to the noise and keep out of the fun."

"All here?" called Jane.

"Here! here!" came the response. Then the choristers, or glee club, or cheering squad, any of which would have denied the accusation, took up that old nonsense:

"We're here, because we're here, because we hate
to go away:
Oh, Breslin fine, and Wellington, get ready for
the fray!"

"A wonderful picture," commented the local scribe, a promising young woman, who did the press work for the schools, and incidentally gained a broader education outside, than was allowed inside the big stone walls.

"Yes, I like the big red ties," assisted Miss Talmadge, to whom the press girl had attached

herself. Isobel Talmadge knew everybody, and always said things good enough to print.

"And the hunters' green of our girls," said Constance Lipton loyally, "makes such a refreshing change from the inevitable blue or khaki. I think our girls' suits practically attractive."

That also was sure to get in the paper.

"And have you noticed, Miss Nevins," Dorothy Blyden ventured, "what a pretty contrast the Gray Bees make?" The Gray Bees were the Breslins, of course, and good little Dorothy felt obliged to see that something nice be said about them.

"A pretty gym," the scribe condescended to note. "My, how prettily the colors are blended! I suppose every class in both schools is represented in those flags and pennants?"

"Yes, we sent ours over," confessed Constance. "We knew we would have a big audience! Here they come. Now for the cheering squad!"

The formalities of cheers inspired the teams to such activity as only a call to arms might be hoped to accomplish. Every girl glowed with interest and enthusiasm as they lined up, tossing up the ball, getting acquainted with it, as they usually did before a game, and making use of the same opportunity to get acquainted with the personnel

of the teams. Each girl made double use of every moment, until the whistle blew.

As the game started, interest compelled the closest attention. The first half occupying twenty minutes of time, was played off without anything more startling than a couple of disastrous fumbles being made by each side. Every one hated to see the ball thus "abused," such skill as was demanded by the promised excellence of both teams seemed to indicate the very cleanest, cleverest play.

"They are just warming up," Constance told Miss Nevins adroitly. It would never do to have fumbles reported in the *Bugle*.

"Oh, yes. All the more exciting when they get warmed up," came the encouraging reply, following a "note" scribbled on the reporter's pad.

The second half, was entered upon with renewed enthusiasm. Spectators leaned forward in their places, and very little conversation broke the spell of eager watching.

"Watch Judith!" Miss Cooper of Wellington remarked to a Breslin fan.

"You mean the standing center?"

"Yes; can't she throw?"

"But I am interested in the jumping center. She can do all kinds of things."

"I am wondering why she does not do anything in particular," came the whisper. "She is one of our stars—Miss Allen."

"Oh, of course. I know Jane. And don't you see what she is doing? She is putting out the very finest line of team play I have ever witnessed. You just watch."

At the moment on the floor Jane was passing that ball with such skill, it never seemed to remain in her own hands long enough for any sort of play. All she did was pass it on. That was perfect team play, but it made very little impression on the spectators.

The game was now tied. Then the ball flew outside the lines. Breslin's jumping center recovered it and glanced over the situation for the fraction of a second. Her side center was too well guarded to send it to her; with a skilful toss, she aimed for the forward, who grabbed it.

"Now for the basket!" whispered the hopeful Breslins.

"Oh, Jane!" almost prayed the Wellington fans, as the ball was thrown back to center by the confused forward who was unable to pass it to her partner under the basket.

In the center Jane was surrounding her opponent like a veritable troop. The Bee was con-

fused. Moments were counting, and she still held on to the ball.

"One—two and——" rang out in the gym.

Then she tried to throw, but Jane was everywhere. The confusion was obvious, even to the onlookers.

"Oh, for that count!" wailed someone.

"Throw it!" yelled the captain to the confused Bee. She raised the ball as if to comply, then with an astonishing fumble, the ball slipped and rolled to Jane's feet. Quick as a flash Jane was after it. Then the dribble, and Jane took one bounce, and with one toss of the ball to her forward under the basket, the ball went home to a goal! And the goal was made for Wellington!

"Oh! Oh! ho! ho!
Rah! Rah! Rah Wellington!
Center! Center! Rah! Rah! Rah!"

The cyclone broke. That strategy on Jane's part won a victory for which she would have been more content to have had any other of the team, than herself, strike the decisive blow.

"You did it. We knew you would. Good old Jane."

"Can't lose her!"

"Brains tell!"

Came the almost indistinguishable tumult of sound.

"Sheer luck," Jane insisted.

"Luck!" mocked Judith. "Even luck knows where to light. Jane, if we lost I should have drowned myself. I have bet away a whole week's stamps and fudge, and goodness knows what all. But we won, and I may open up shop again. Just look over there at Marian. Have her friends all deserted her?"

"Oh, call her in," suggested Jane. "It's a shame, here in a strange school."

"Not little Judy," replied the other. "I may take a chance on betting fudge against Breslins, but I would not be so rash as to take a chance on anything like that. Oh, there she goes with our reporter! What if she gives any news of the Barn Swifts?"

"Oh, she wouldn't!" but Jane's voice sounded apprehensive.

"Well, if she does, we will simply—that is, we certainly will," stuttered Judith, too overcome to talk coherently. She was waving her arms and indicating dire calamity on Marian's unfortunate head.

"Still, Judy, we should have kept track of that nice little reporter. It would be perfectly awful

if Marian gave her any news about Helen's hidden talent."

"Oh, Jane, I am absolutely sure she will do just that. I never before saw her so abject to a mere business woman. By the way, dear, where is Helen?"

"Oh, didn't I tell you? Mrs. Weatherbee asked me if we would not all agree to leave the child pretty much alone for a few days. She thought it would be so much better for her nerves, not to be talked to. I agreed with her, as I have found Helen absolutely impossible lately. She will not come out, and she just sits and hugs her letters."

"Does she ever show you any of her letters, Jane?"

"No," faltering. "But why should she?"

"Why should she not? Now, there, I didn't mean a thing, but we have not yet heard the story of that magic card, you know. What was on that card, Jane?"

"Judy, you little nuisance," and Jane smiled in mockery. "As if I could tell you anything about that now! Run along, and tell the girls to spread the news about our big dance next Wednesday evening. Remember, it is given in honor of the Breslins."

CHAPTER XXVI

ANGELS UNAWARES

THE big dance was over. Wellington had entertained the Breslins royally, and not even the absence of "real men" effected a barrier between the romping college girls and the best of good times. In fact, as the girls were wont to declare, it was a lot more fun without boys at college. Of course boys have their place, and that specifically at dances, but those who have ever enjoyed the privilege of participating in a girls' dance at a big college, testify to the genuineness of the mirth, the joyousness of such an entertainment.

Basketball games were now being run off from a schedule that filled in every date from the height of the season to the Christmas vacation.

As Jane and Judith had predicted early in the term, sports had reached the acme of popularity

at Wellington, and so well was the spirit and team work developed, that the usual small talk, and smaller squabbles were almost entirely obliterated, from the school curriculum—that furnished by the students, and not announced in the official prospectus.

Marian Seaton and Dolorez Vincez still "teamed up" and were under the ever watchful eye of the faculty, but the authoritative bomb had not yet actually exploded, and both girls appeared to hold their places in spite of Mrs. Weatherbee's threat, concerning the proposed beauty parlor offence. But Dolorez played no more basketball.

Nor had the beauty shop enterprise been abandoned, though just who was actually responsible for the little cottage now undergoing repair, with the evident intent of opening up, no one was prepared to announce.

Jane, true to her promise, had quickly spread the word of disapproval among the student body, and in this she was ably supported and promptly assisted by Judith. It took little effort to convince the girls that Wellington would not permit her pupils to be canvassed in any business interest, and possibly, the character of the enterprise, being so closely allied to rampant vanity, had

something to do with the quick reaction to their own disapproval.

With interest almost mounting to anxiety Jane watched for the local paper, the *Bugle,* published at the end of each month. She had reason to fear it would contain some material not given officially by the press committee of the college. The intimacy of Marian Seaton with the reporter was interpreted by both Judith and Jane as presaging trouble in print, and in the time elapsing, that fear of some disclosure concerning Helen grew in intensity with Jane, and was shared by the reliable and ever considerate Judith.

One morning early in December Jane received a little note from Helen, who, according to Mrs. Weatherbee's arrangements, was doing her work quietly, and without the possibility of companions well meant though perhaps unthinking.

Helen took her exercise with the others, ate her meals in the refectory, went to a few lectures, but outside of that she was leading such a school life as an artist or a very serious student might be expected to adhere to. All her rollicking good humored individuality was suddenly swallowed up in what appeared to her companions as concentration, but Jane and Judith surmised it

was associated with a more serious and less ordinary condition of affairs.

With uncertain fingers Jane tore open the little note inscribed in the peculiarly foreign vertical penmanship. She feared it might be a good bye, or at least the forerunner of a farewell, as Helen for two months past seemed to be at Wellington only from moment to moment, ready to leave at a word—the word Jane had so well forestalled up to the present. The missive, however, was not an adieu. It ran as follows:

"My dearest friend:

"You have been very patient with Helen. Each day I have longed for the pleasure of throwing open to you my anguished heart, but every day comes, and is closed by a night as dark as that before, and still I must wait—wait!

"The little card tied to my flowers I send with this. The name on it is almost sacred to me, and the sight of that name gave me the shock you witnessed. I felt he must be near, and that soon I would see him, but now I know it was all a cruel hoax, and I the victim of that hateful girl, who has so much wronged me, here at this beautiful school!

"I must tell you, my friend, that I did not know

that other woman (she is more than girl), the black-eyed, black-haired foreigner. But now I know her. She was at Blindwood, and there with her then yellow hair, she taught in the gym. So it was she who perpetrated this outrage—she who thought it smart to see me almost faint with hope from the word written on my flower card.

"But have patience, my friend, and all will still be well, with your grateful and affectionate

"Helen."

The fateful card fell into Jane's lap. On it was written the words:

"To beloved Helka
from
Stanislaus."

She turned over and over the innocent bit of pasteboard. And that was all—just those two names. What did it mean? Who was Stanislaus?

Pondering still on the new mystery Jane recalled that a boy had been mentioned in connection with the mysterious fainting spell Helen suffered, just before leaving Miss Jordan's apartment in New York. Jane herself had seen someone in the lower hall, as she went out that day

with Judith, and in innocent prattle, one of the freshmen had charged Jane with having a boy caller while in New York. Now, all this was recalled by the sinister act of Marian Seaton and Dolorez Vincez, who maliciously put those two names together on that fatal card presented to Helen after her triumph.

The card and Helen's letter still lay in Jane's lap when a tap with its three trills, Judith's code, touched the door. Not waiting for a response Judith was in the room, almost before Jane had a chance to put the mystery safely under cover.

"Jane, Redhead, Bricktop, and Carroty, et al," cried Judith. "Stop, Look and Listen! We are going to have a big public concert and we are going to have it in Martineau Hall. Now, who says Wellington is out of date, and a back number?"

"Whoever has dared to say such a thing?" recharged Jane. "I am sure I have never heard of any such accusation. But why the excitement? What is the answer?"

"Don't you know? It's to be a big public benefit. And we are to sell tickets by mail, to all the home folks, and I can send a whole strip to my cowboy, one Fedario——"

"Oh, do be sensible, Judy. I can't see any good reason for being crazy over a mere concert."

"That's because you don't know the real joy of going crazy. I have been whoopeeing all over the place, and everyone but you whoopeed with me. Now, you get the dipper out, and threaten me with a cold plunge. Don't, Jane dear. Go ahead, come on, be crazy with me," and she all but smothered the defenceless Jane in her own good sofa pillows.

"All right," agreed Jane. "Consider me crazy. Now proceed."

"You are on the committee to get the talent. That may mean a trip to New York. I know why you got that."

"Why?"

"Well, Drusilla said, and you know what a wizard Dru is—she said the faculty knew that if a Wellington check should go to protest on the high 'C' of some prima donna, that Henry Allen, per Redhead Jane, would make it all right at the bank."

It took a moment for that statement to filter through Jane's brain. Then she laughed.

"Oh, nonsense, Judy! You know perfectly well there are plenty of girls here richer than I am."

"Oh, yes, that is quite true, little one. But no girl is more generous, and this affair is to be one

grand clean up of every old debt ever wished on our Alma Mater. Even the protested butcher bill I hear is to be paid up after the concert, and we are to go on chops again. Cheers!"

"Joking aside, it will be nice to have a real affair," assented Jane, "and I am sure we can get a wonderful array of talent. But why should you think I may be asked to interview the talent?"

"Well, the Weatherbee is going to town, and she couldn't go alone. Some one might steal her, and she insinuated she might take Miss Allen. It appears there is one star she must see by hand. So I predict, lucky one, you will duck that much discussed and disgusting forensic. Whilst I pine, and tar, and tarry: being the only friend of Jane Allen," and Judith made an absurd attempt to sob, with the disastrous result of a gag, and choking fit, upsetting, for the moment, coherent speech.

Jane wanted to tell her chum of Helen's letter, but hesitated, the exuberant spirits fizzing and bubbling over the proposed concert, reminded Jane, that Judith was first a girl, second the confidant. It would be rash to impose upon her at that moment, the serious portend of Helen's affairs.

"And have you heard about the beauty parlor?" further effused Judith.

"What's new?"

"Dolorez is packing, ready to check out."

"You mean she is leaving college?"

"College is leaving her, she has been requested to avaunt."

"Oh, what do you mean, Judy? Has Dolorez been expelled?"

"Well, it was this way," and the tantalizing girl propped her head more compactly with an extra cushion. "It seems she went right on with the scheme, in the very face of all protests. The people she had interested refused to withdraw, on so simple a difficulty as a Wellington blockade or boycott—take your choice. Then, when Dolorez kept going out, and coming in, and lugging furniture from the village, and pinning up impossible curtains with Wellington hammer and tacks, Mrs. Weatherbee just called her before President Blakesly and Dean Rutledge. They had an interesting session in Warburton Hall, Dol shed a few tears of sheer rage, then crumbled up in a tailor-made heap—and cried 'Kamerad!' "

"Judy, has Dolorez gone?"

"She hasn't kissed me good bye yet, and I do

hope she will not fail to avail herself of the privilege. But I fancy she is about on the wing by now. I saw old Peter with his ground plane, and I think I knew the trunk."

"I wanted to appeal to Dolorez not to—injure Helen, Judith." Jane said in her most sober tone, emphasized with the serious title Judith instead of Judy. "I have felt she must have enough kindness somewhere to listen to reason, and you know, she is the only one here who knew Helen at Blindwood. Out there perhaps, our little girl had not sense enough to be as conservative as she is now, and it is quite possible Dolorez knows more about the troubles than do you or I."

"I wouldn't wonder, Jane," replied Judith, also assuming a serious tone. "I have heard so many remarks the origin of which I have laid at Dolorez' door. That nonsense about a boy calling in New York was purely her mental output, the brand being plainly marked with her particular identification code. But how is our little Helen? Haven't seen her in a rock of ages."

"She is better alone, and doing wonderful work at her studies and her music. I had a note from her just now. She says we must be patient and soon she will be able to—emerge from her shadow. She sends her love, etc."

"The dear!" and Judith's eyes melted with a sentiment as sincere as that now engulfing the gray orbs of Jane. "Whoever would have thought we would have this struggle to keep her in her well-earned place in Wellington? Isn't it true, Janey dear, that trouble begets trouble?"

"It seems too true to be pleasant just now," replied Jane. "But, Judy, we have come through. We have given Helen a chance here she could never have otherwise obtained. And she has been so worth while."

"We have given it to her! You mean you have done so! Ages ago I should have scared the poor child off with my foolish questioning, and somehow, that remarkable redhead of yours knew better. I believe red hair only grows in gray matter."

"All the same, Judy dear, I should have been helpless without you. I believe Heaven makes girls in pairs."

"Then I insist you were the pattern, and they liked it so well after they had a chance to look you over, that they gave me some of the same effect. There, wouldn't our theology shock the Theo. Faculty? But I know one thing, girl, I am perfectly sure Heaven loves girls who love themselves."

"Back to earth, my dear," commanded Jane. "Has our basketball secretary fixed up the new schedule? Aren't we making a fine record this year?"

"Oh, we started out to do that, to the last question; and to the first, yes, Constance has fixed up the schedule, she announced it at the practice from which you were excused. But, Jane, I had the darlingest letter from one of the Breslins, Marie Condon. She insists you have a system, and wants a line on it. She said Katherine, who fumbled in the big game and gave you the ball, never was known to do anything like that before. Now, Jane, did you actually and truly hypnotize her?"

"Silly, I merely used the regular strategy. She did keep her gaze fixed on me instead of the ball——"

"Oh, well, your beauty did the trick then. It's all the same," finished the effervescent Judith. "I have known your eyes to do that to little me, and I never could stand up under your old-time ingrown smile."

"Judy, I have sent sweet little Mrs. Meeker all the six samples, and I want to compliment you on yours. It was very prettily done, and I wouldn't wonder if some very nice soldier, or his

girl, would write you a little letter of thanks. I took pains to mark each sampler with the name and address of the Mirabelle Dictu who finished it. Helen did two. Dickey couldn't finish hers."

"Oh, that's lovely, Janie. I am so glad to have had just one more piece of war work to my credit. We begin to miss the dreadful war. And I am sure Mrs. Meeker will be overjoyed to get her pretty beaded pieces all so nicely finished. That was another of your inspirations, Jane."

"Judy, I will not stand for any more compliments. They make me feel so self conscious. You surely don't want a perfect angel for a chum, do you?"

"Couldn't do a thing with a perfect angel but shoo her back to heaven. No, sister-chum, we are all very human, but I think rather prettily so," and she stood before the small mirror over Jane's dresser, framing her face with a satisfied smile, no one could have blamed her for.

"Away away! Je-u-ty—calls," mocked Jane, paraphrasing "Duty" to offset beauty. "Take thyself hence, and dig in. We are having a lovely time, but even a good time has its limitations—at Wellington."

CHAPTER XXVII

WHAT THE "BUGLE" BLEW

JANE was going to New York with Mrs. Weatherbee. For some reason not fully explained the director wished particularly to have Jane with her. The long waits and short intervals possible with such talent as was to be sought out, for the Golden Jubilee Concert of Wellington, made it imperative that Mrs. Weatherbee have with her an assistant who could do some of the waiting, if not any of the interviewing, so for that reason, ostensibly, Jane was chosen.

The reliable old car, paradoxically called the Cozy Roadster, waited at the broad stone steps, bright and early Thursday morning, and the wait even with prompt Peter at the wheel, was calculated to be of short duration with Mrs. Weatherbee as passenger.

"Good bye, Jane," called Judith, "give my love to little old New York."

"Oh, Janey! Here is the *Bugle!* Just out. You can read it on the train," shouted Drusilla, thrusting a copy of the much-awaited paper into the gloved hand of Jane.

Then they were off. The three hours train ride to New York City afforded both Mrs. Weatherbee and Jane a welcome opportunity to glimpse the world outside of Wellington. Also Mrs. Weatherbee might rest, and Jane might read.

Jane could scarcely wait to fulfill the usual train formalities before running her anxious eyes over the short columns of print in search of Whispers from Wellington. There were the Breslin Breezes, and the Carlton Clatter. Yes, there it was! Wellington Whispers!

Jane read over the usual announcements. The basketball news appeared and there was the report of the Barn Swifts Extravaganza. She saw the print as a whole, but one line stood out as if entirely capitalized. It was:

"Helka Podonsky, the Mystery of the College!"

Then followed a pacifying account of Helka's wonderful talent, and the intimation that she

might be a royal personage in hiding. Jane ran her deep gray eyes over the column, and as she read they seemed to deepen, intensified with indignation, so that the fires usually hidden, now threatened to blaze outright. In sort of a panic she quickly passed the little sheet to Mrs. Weatherbee. Followed such an adjusting of glasses, and such a poring over that column, Jane need not wait to hear what the director thought of the astonishing publication. Every move indicated intense indignation. Finally Mrs. Weatherbee looked up, caught Jane's eye and breathed deeply.

"Who could have done that?" she exclaimed in a very low voice.

"Isn't it awful?" Jane returned.

"Have you any idea how it came—about?"

"The reporter, Miss Nevins, was with Marian Seaton at the Breslin game," Jane answered frankly. "Of course, Marian—dislikes Helen."

"Oh, that's it! Well, this seems to be the final stroke. I have done everything possible, and made all sorts of allowances for Marian, because she has been handicapped by a frivolous mother, and an indulgent father. Of late when affairs at Wellington assumed a really serious turn, I felt our patience and endurance had been ex-

hausted, and I may tell you, my dear, Miss Seaton was marked for leaving Wellington."

"Oh, that would be too bad," sighed the considerate Jane.

"Yes, I agree with you, but Miss Seaton has given so much annoyance. Only your own intervention more than once saved her. And this, in face of the fact that you were the most—abused victim of her idiosyncracies. But this is altogether too serious to admit of forgiveness. There's no telling what mischief that absurd article may work."

Jane accepted again the despised sheet, and reading the disputed "story" over more carefully, she visioned all sorts of dire calamities coming to defenceless little Helen, through this open announcement of "The Mystery of Wellington College. It was too awful—too horrible, after all their carefully executed plans, to save her from publicity.

As the train sped on to New York scenes at Wellington had also shifted. Marian Seaton and Dolorez Vincez were having their inevitable reckoning.

Dolorez had sought out Marian—going so far as to lie in wait for the harassed girl, as she left

the grounds for her noon trip to the post-office.

"You have got to come in here and listen to me," commanded the young woman, who had been posing as a young girl. She grasped the arm of Marian, the latter frightened to the point of running away. "Do you think you can leave me like this?"

"But, Dolorez," begged Marian, "I did not promise to do anything I have not done. I got all the girls to agree to take treatments——"

"Yes, but what you should have done was to get that firey little Allen out of the way. She has spoiled everything. Now, what am I to do with all this junk," indicating a miscellaneous collection of stuff, misnamed furniture, that glared at both girls from piles and heaps in all four corners of the disordered room.

"You seem to forget, Miss Vincez, that it is I who am really suffering from all this," spoke Marian with prideable hauteur. "I have gotten myself all but expelled from college, I have lost every friend, and I have done something, the result of which I am afraid to—to contemplate. And now you are going to charge me with failing you!"

A scornful laugh accompanied by the shrug-

ging of a pair of over-developed shoulders, was Marian's answer. Dolorez was an adventurer—and Marian her latest victim!

"You are very squeamish, it seems to me for one in your place," sneered the Brazilian. "What about your debts?"

"Oh!" gasped the overwrought Marian. "Please don't!"

To express at least conditional pity for Marian Seaton is but human. She had made flagrant mistakes, but after all she was only a poor, neglected girl. Neglected by a foolish, frivolous mother, and variously indulged or rashly disciplined by a father, who made his money storming the business world through the medium of overworked and underpaid employees. His blustering ill-trained nature had served him in a way with factory workers, but it was not the sort of method from which to expect success when applied to a young, good-looking and ambitious girl, his only daughter Marian. Not knowing what it was she missed in her short life, the girl, now stood confronted with a record of deceit, and debts, and school dishonor. We will not yet condemn her without at least a trial.

The two, Marian and Dolorez, had stormed and threatened, until it was clear neither could hope

to obtain any satisfaction from the other, under such conflict. Marian finally broke away literally from her captor, who now stood in the doorway of the ill-fated beauty parlor, glaring after the vanishing figure, all the venomous hatred, and avengeful threats glaring from her black eyes, and striking through the ill-natured lines of her Latin features.

"You will hear from me later, my high-strung American," she all but hissed. "I do not admit a bunch of feather-headed girls are better fighters than I."

But Marian was running down the path, and was fortunately well out of hearing.

Within a recreation room, Judith, in Jane's absence, became prompter and promoter of all things necessary and interesting to Jane's adherents. Naturally, the *Bugle* news all but disrupted the day's program, and now, in the noon hour, Judith and her friends were devouring and discussing that astonishing article concerning Helen.

"Well, what if she is a noble," lisped Clare Bradley, "wouldn't that be nice?"

"Lovely, of course," flared back Dickey Ripple. "But suppose she doesn't want to be a noble?"

"Oh, well, then she needn't," finished the inconsistent blonde.

"That's not it at all," explained Judith. "We don't want Helen disturbed and run after by a lot of notoriety seekers."

"Certainly not," agreed Drusilla. "Suppose they come down on us and ransack the place——"

"And carry you off by mistake," Grazia could not refrain from adding.

"I always knew there was something queer about Helen," added Minette, with undisguised banality.

"Yes, that is, she was smarter than any girl you ever met," corrected Weasie Blair. "That was the queer part of her."

"And that hateful reporter! Wait until she comes around here again snooping for news!" contributed Dorothy Blyden.

"Yes, just wait!" vociferated Ted Guthrie.

"At any rate," ordered Judith. "We must see to it that every *Bugle* is cornered on the campus. Not a line of this must by any chance come under Helen's eyes."

"We will raid every house and sweep up every path," volunteered Drusilla. "I love Helen Powderly and I am going to see that she has fair play."

"Bravo!" chorused the girls, now scattering at the call of the gong sounding the one thirty session.

Still one more scene, important to our story, is being enacted at Wellington. Helen, in her solitary room, is quivering with suppressed excitement. She has had a letter from Stanislaus—her friend and her protector. He has, at last, found she is alive, and at Wellington College. And his letter came to the girl, who is truly in hiding, through their mutual friend, Alice Mahon, a social service worker of New York City.

"Dear, dear friend!" sighed Helen happily. "How very soon I may tell my dear Jane and Judith who you are! Very soon I may throw off my cloak of disguise. I, Helka Podonsky, so long in the servitude of dishonest captors."

Once more she read the brief note penned in Polish. How much those few precious words meant to her!

"Just a little while more," she sighed, folding the note as if it might escape from her holding. "Just until Stanislaus comes."

And that afternoon Helen Powderly appeared at her class, smiling and happy, all unconscious of the *Bugle* and its baneful story.

CHAPTER XXVIII

MADAM NALASKY

THE promised long waits, in the offices and parlors of musical talent had descended upon Mrs. Weatherbee and Jane. It having been impossible to make an appointment for his interviews, the director was accepting the situation philosophically, but it was trying, and all but exhausting.

"You see, my dear," she explained to Jane, "by seeing them personally, we have a chance to solicit their interest in our college, and some of these singers are the daughters of former students. That gives us an opening. This lady we are now waiting for is a stranger, but if we can obtain her promise to sing for us, our concert will be an assured success. She is the rage of the season, and a wonderful concert soprano."

"Oh, yes, I have seen her pictures, and read her

name many times lately," Jane followed. "As you say, Mrs. Weatherbee, it will mean everything if we can secure her."

"But I have to go back to that violinist at three, my dear, and Mme. Nalasky will not be able to appear from her boudoir until two thirty. I wonder if I could leave you here, and go myself to the violinist? Then, if Madam appears you might make the preliminary appeal. I hate to leave it to you, but I feel you would have a better chance with her than with the other, and I cannot be in both places at the same time."

"Oh, I shall be glad to try, Mrs. Weatherbee," assented Jane, rather glad indeed at the prospect of a quiet half hour in the luxurious room, in which strangers, properly introduced, daily awaited the presence of the noted singer. "If Madam appears I shall do my best."

Satisfied it was perfectly safe to leave her charge in the room so well peopled with women servants of the prima donna, one a secretary, one evidently a personal maid, and still another a matronly woman who attended to strangers after they had successfully passed the hall boy's scrutiny and stereotyped interrogations, Mrs. Weatherbee hurried off for her final word from the elusive violinist.

Jane settled down deeply in her cushions. But presently she was aware of a stir in the room.

"Madam is ready," briefly announced the secretary, taking the card from the young woman who had been waiting longest.

Jane sat up attentively. The girl with the great fur scarf was ushered into the next room. No one read or shifted about the waiting room now. Everyone was expectant, and evidently a little excited.

"Oh, if Mrs. Weatherbee is not here!" breathed Jane. Then she tidied up her belongings, and prepared to be ushered in, if that good fortune came her way next.

She must plead for Wellington. And perhaps she would be able to do so more effectively than she had supposed. The girl with the fur scarf and great bundle of music was coming out smiling. Her interview had been satisfactory, Jane guessed, and very likely it had to do with a musical ambition. Jane hoped so.

Her own card was in her hand when the secretary approached. That functionary took it with a pleasant nod and disappeared. Jane felt just a little nervous. She had secretly hoped Mrs. Weatherbee would appear in time for the interview.

"Miss Allen!" called the attendant, and Jane self-consciously followed into the sanctum.

The soft luxury of the room was almost lost upon Jane, so intent was she on her mission, and so fascinated was her gaze by the living picture sitting in the small mahogany chair. This was Mme. Nalasky. She smiled so frankly as Jane approached, the latter's embarrassment was swept away in her all-embracing welcome.

"Oh, my dear little girl," spoke the noted singer, with a distinctly foreign accent. "What can I do for you?" After a preliminary word of explanation Jane briefly told of the Golden Jubilee Concert.

"Oh, yes, I have been informed by your honored president. I know of him for many years—that is, quite many." She corrected herself, for one could see the woman was young, and very charming in her blonde, fair beauty.

Jane then attempted to tell of the talent already secured, and being somewhat at a loss to guarantee, as yet, anything like a brilliant array, to support so noted an artist as Mme. Nalasky, she ventured to suggest that a young girl at college would play the violin, and Jane declared further, this young girl was quite a promising artist.

In this Madam was at once interested. "I always like to hear of the young stars," she said. "Sometimes a very little star comes out wonderfully when all the cobwebs in her sky have been cleared away."

Thus encouraged, Jane unfolded quite a story of Helen's achievement. Then she remembered the *Bugle*. Therein had been expressed a view of Helen's ability, better than Jane could hope to recount, so without a thought, other than that to benefit the concert, Jane drew from her bag the copy of the *Bugle*, with its bewildering arraignment of Helen's power.

The artist glanced at the little sheet with polite but indifferent interest. Jane felt, for a moment, she had made a mistake in offering so humble a testimonial. Then suddenly the prima donna sat erect. Her eyes showed intense interest. Her long, wonderfully tapering fingers seemed to clutch the much-abused little *Bugle* with an intensity at once strange and foreign to the occasion.

"Oh, my dear!" she exclaimed. "Tell me what is this? Who is this little artist?" and she glared at Jane as if trying to obtain in that fixed gaze some explanation of the lines she had just read.

"Why!" faltered Jane. "She is a little fresh-

man—who is at Wellington. She is a very great friend of mine."

"But tell me about her!" begged the woman, actually seizing Jane's hands. "What does she look like? What is her real name? Do you know? Please tell me quickly."

Jane now saw the prima donna was laboring under some great strain and excitement. So apparent was her agitation the secretary, who had remained at a respectful distance during the interview, hastened to the side of her mistress.

"Oh, pray, what is it, Madam?" she asked in alarm. "Why such excitement?"

"But, Marie, you cannot know!" gasped the artist. "This is more to me than life itself. Oh, what if it should be——" she hesitated. "Little lady!" she again directly addressed Jane. "Can you tell me just what the Polish girl looks like? Has she pretty eyes and pretty hair? And is she a sweet child? Oh, how shall I ever wait to know!"

The intensity of the excitement was proving too much for Madam Nalasky, and Jane ardently wished she had kept the hapless *Bugle* to herself. But it was too late now. Besides this, in offering the flattering tribute of Helen's ability to the

singer, Jane had a sense of making the artist acquainted with Helen, hoping the light knowledge might some day be of value in her musical career. But now, Madam was almost overcome. Her attendants were quieting her with smelling draughts from a tiny bottle. Jane glanced at the outer door hopefully. If only Mrs. Weatherbee would appear! What if this lady was erratic, and her suddenly taken a spell? Jane remembered geniuses are apt to be very temperamental.

"I am so sorry," she said quietly to a maid. "I hope I have not upset Madam?"

"Oh, no, my dear. It is not the upset, but the joy, the hope. How shall I know! Can you not tell me what your friend looks like?" This from Madam.

Again the singer was on her feet confronting Jane. For a moment Jane fixed her eyes on the beautiful face, then she exclaimed:

"Oh, Madam! I think she looks like you."

With a great swirling embrace Jane was actually swept into the singer's arms. Strong emotion, always a characteristic of such temperaments, was now completely swaying the artist. Jane, abashed and disconcerted, sensed the depth of the emotion, and guessed the identity of

Helka Podonsky was very near to the heart of this handsome woman.

At that moment the appearance of Mrs. Weatherbee at the door brought welcome relief from the confusion and excitement. Jane quickly made known Mrs. Weatherbee's connection with the jubilee concert, and Mme. Nalasky turned all her attention now to questioning the directress.

After a very storm of inquiries concerning Helen and her whereabouts before coming to Wellington had been heaped upon the directress. Madam finally begged leave to go to the college at once.

"But!" protested her secretary, "Madam! Your most important concert this evening! It is a benefit, you remember, Madam! and they especially wish you to sing."

"Oh, Marie, you do not know, and I cannot at present say how very much this means to me. This is my own grand benefit, and I, Nalasky, who have given always gladly to others, now claim something for myself. My understudy must take the concert. I could not close my eyes again, until I have seen this wonder child. Ah, my dear lady," to Mrs. Weatherbee, who was too surprised for utterance at the turn affairs had taken. "I feel this young girl, Miss Allen,

has been an agent of kind Providence. She has protected this child from a wild and treacherous world," and again Madam took refuge in her pillows, sobbing and smiling alternately.

Realizing that nothing could deter her, the attendants put themselves to the task of preparing for a hasty departure of their distinguished mistress, and when Jane and Mrs. Weatherbee took their places in the Lake Shore train that afternoon, it was in a luxurious and exclusive private compartment, reserved at the request of Mme. Nalasky, their companion on the journey.

Immediately upon entraining, Madam was tucked into her couch by the faithful Marie, who could scarcely restrain from open rebellion, that Madam should so exhaust herself, to the danger of her marvellous voice. To these commands the singer reluctantly consented, although it was clear she would have much preferred taking Mrs. Weatherbee and Jane.

"Oh, Mrs. Weatherbee," breathed Jane, alone once more with her director. "Isn't it too strange for words!"

"Like a fairy story, my dear, but stories follow some people and I fancy they have a liking for you." She was in splendid humor and the very

best of spirits, in spite of her hard day spent at collecting talent for the concert.

"Whatever will Helen say?" Jane could not help wondering aloud.

"We have a pleasant scene ahead of us," answered Mrs. Weatherbee smilingly.

"And the little paper—to think it was through that article this has really come about," further mused Jane.

"Oh, no, my dear. You would have found this through one means if not another. True, the *Bugle* served—but you operated it." Mrs. Weatherbee insisted upon being complimentary.

"And I feel, Mrs. Weatherbee," Jane ventured further, "if this all comes out beautifully, we ought to forgive Marian. After all, she gave out the news that did the—that worked the miracle."

"Well, poor Marian is of the class bound to get into trouble, but I shall be very glad indeed if we can find some extenuating circumstance for her latest offence." She was good natured to the point of indulgence.

"But, don't you think, Mrs. Weatherbee, the very fact that this seems to be providential makes a claim for Marian?" Jane was very cautious

now. She did not mean to appear dictatorial to her superior.

Mrs. Weatherbee smiled. "Leave it to Jane to find an excuse," she replied, unmindful of having used a clap-trap phrase. "You do manage beautifully, my dear, to get girls out of trouble."

"But, you see, I have been in trouble myself at times," explained Jane, "and I know how hard it is to extricate oneself. Marian is spiteful, and that leads her into mischief, but think of her disadvantages at home. Then just think of my wonderful daddy——"

The school official smiled broadly. Yes, Jane had reason to be thankful for her inheritance.

"Your father's scholarship has done more than it ever promised to accomplish. I feel we have a beautiful scene to unfold as a prelude to our Golden Jubilee benefit," she replied.

"Oh, I am so glad!" sighed Jane as she lay back to watch the sunset creep over the Catskills.

What would happen when they reached Wellington? However would all the girls understand the wonderful turn in events? It was too delicious to contemplate.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE BOY STANISLAUS

AS night gathered around Wellington, and while the fast train cut through the hills, back to the little station where so many happy, and perhaps a few sad hearts had come and gone from the old college, there was hidden in one of the campus houses a girl who had refused her meals, and lay disconsolate on her couch, wretched and alone; perhaps even forgotten by her erstwhile companions. This was Marian Seaton.

"Oh, if Jane Allen were only here!" she repeated again and again. "She would be good enough to at least tell me what to do."

Nor was it strange that the avowed enemy of Jane should take refuge in this thought; for Marian Seaton well knew that Jane Allen would

never stoop to seek revenge; even from one so unloved as she.

But Jane was in New York. She had been away when the storm broke over Marian's head, and Marian felt the full force of the blow which had fallen without the intervention Jane Allen would have been sure to exert.

When Drusilla and Judith had sufficiently recovered from the spell of indignation occasioned by the perusal of the *Bugle* account of the Barn Swifts and the "Mystery of Wellington College," they set out directly to call Marian Seaton to account. Nor did they allow her much opportunity for explanation. Marian reluctantly admitted she had given out that information, and also confessed to knowledge of the penalty for such an offense. During the arraignment the girl kept herself up with that courage peculiar to most young offenders. But immediately her inquisitors were gone she collapsed.

And there she lay, all in a miserable heap. Poor Marian! Surely Jane would be good to her when she knew how much her sympathy was needed.

The fate of Dolorez was of little interest. She might be outside the big gate in the shabby cottage banging around and breaking up the unfor-

tunate furniture, for all anyone within the gates knew or cared; for Dolorez had been expelled peremptorily, the day previous. Not even a kind look from the troops of girls passing in and out was offered to mitigate her indignity. Dolorez evidently cared little for anything other than enterprise, and that of a forbidden variety when found around girls' colleges, where the fostering of unwholesome vanity is considered detrimental to their interests.

But Marian was still a pupil of old Wellington, and she was also a young and now a very heart-broken girl. With a throbbing head, she finally arose and bathed her tear-stained face. She was determined to seek out Judith and ask for her intervention before Mrs. Weatherbee should arrive. Out on the lonely path—all the girls were at their studies after the evening meal—Marian pulled up suddenly at the sight of a shadow coming toward her. It was just dark enough to outline the figure as that of a man. Marian stepped out of the path to allow him to pass. First she was impelled to slip behind the big oak tree, then with something of a reckless abandon, she kept to the roadway and encountered the youth face to face, under a dimly burning street lamp.

He stopped and raised his hat. Then spoke with an accent, inquiring for the office. Marian directed him, and was passing on when he asked:

"Do you happen to know is there here a young lady who is called Helen?"

Marian could not repress a smile. A girl named Helen!

"Oh, yes. There are a number of Helens here," she replied. "What other name?"

"Oh, I beg pardon," and he swung his hat with a grace peculiar to cultured foreigners. "I should have said Helen Powderly."

"Oh, yes, I know Helen very well. She is at Ivy Nook," replied Marian. "But you would have to see her in the office," she added not unkindly.

"I should suppose so," he agreed. "That is why I shall go to the building. I am glad to know she is still here, and I thank you, mademoiselle."

"You are entirely welcome," replied Marian. "But I am going toward Helen's house—could I take the message?"

"That would be very kind. I should be glad if Helen knew I—Stanislaus—am here, if mademoiselle would tell her."

"Oh, yes, certainly," replied Marian, a sting of conscience stabbing her at the utterance of that name "Stanislaus." That was the name Dolorez had forged to the flower card.

And this princely young foreigner was Stanislaus. Marian turned toward Helen's cottage, a new thought possessing her. Perhaps now she could do something to make amends! She would give Helen the good news and—joy might banish the thought of anger, of revenge!

Quickly Marian sped over the campus in the early night shadows, while the stranger continued his way to the office of Wellington College. It was still a reasonable time to receive messages, at least, from the outside world, and the office kept in touch with all the campus houses for any such emergency.

But what if Helen were not there? She, Marian, had not been out of her room since that eventful visit of Judith, directly after lunch, and Helen may not have been in Wellington since the day before, so far as she knew. At that time Dolorez had promised, in her threats, she would oust the little Polock and give her a taste of the "sort of treatment" she, Dolorez, had been exposed to.

"Yes, there is a light," she murmured, looking

up over the little porch at the window she knew to be Helen's. "How shall I tell her?"

Running lightly up the stairs of the tastefully arranged Ivy Nook, Marian was presently at Helen's door. She hesitated, patted her hair, and corrected the flying ribbon of her tie. The situation of meeting Helen now actually confronted her, even the courage so gratefully accepted when down the campus path, seemed waning. But, presently Marian tapped lightly at the door.

There was a step within, and then the door opened. Helen drew back at the sight of her visitor. She had not expected Marian Seaton.

"Oh, Helen," gasped Marian. "I have such good news——"

"*You* have good news," repeated the astonished girl, with an unpleasant inflection of the pronoun.

"Yes, Helen. Do be—reasonable. I am in such a hurry. There is a caller for you at the office——"

"Won't you step in?" asked Helen, interested now.

"Oh, yes, Helen," and Marian, condescending and abject, crossed the sill. "I don't know how to tell you, but he gave the name Dolorez forged to your card. He says he is—Stanislaus!"

"Oh, my Stanislaus! Where is he! You are not deceiving me again!" and with this question, the excited girl seized Marian, whirled her around to the light, and glared into her frightened face.

"Oh, no, Helen. I would not deceive you like that. I did not write that card, or think of it. It was Dol——"

"Yes, you need talk to me of her, and I believe you now, although—but never mind," suddenly breaking off her unfinished sentence. "Where is the one who says he—is—my—Stanislaus?"

"At the office. I met him looking for you, and I offered to come. But just one moment, Helen, please. I am in deep trouble, and I want to ask your forgiveness first."

The Polish girl breathed heavily, and drew away just a trifle. But that action gave Marian her answer.

"But you know Jane would be reasonable, Helen, and I want to have the courage to face her—when she comes. Think, you have had so much worry, but now it will soon be over surely, yet I am more alone than you, for I have no—good friend."

This appeal touched the heart of the other, and she quickly laid her hand into that of the trembling Marian.

"I see your grief is sincere, and, as you say, Jane is always—forgiving, so if it pleases her, you need have no fear from me. But let me get to the office. Are you coming back?" asked Helen.

"Yes, no, I don't know. I am so anxious to see them first, after the train comes in. It will be due very soon. You go along, Helen, and thank you. I hope your friend brings you very good news."

"Oh, he will! Stanislaus never fails!" and at that Helen was off down the stairs, and only the light slam of the door closing, brought to Marian the realization of being alone.

The door opened as she mounted the steps, and Miss Bennet, secretary to Mrs. Weatherbee, awaited her arrival.

"I just phoned over for you, Miss Powderly," she said. "A friend is waiting," and her smile betrayed something of the good news expected.

"Oh, Stanislaus! My friend! My brother!" exclaimed the overwrought Helen, rushing in and grasping the two outstretched hands of the young man who stood in the center of the office. "At last you have come! Oh, it is too good!"

"And as good to me, little sister!" replied the young man affectionately, returning Helen's

greeting. "It seems years I have been looking."

"Let us sit down," said Helen, finally releasing the hand of her caller, "over there by the big palm. You see, Stan, I have a very lovely home. And we will tell our story in English, Stan, for Miss Bennet is my very good friend."

Miss Bennet smiled her appreciation of the compliment. Had Helen chosen to use her native tongue, Polish, the secretary would have felt like one endured through sufferance, but English has a way of floating around, even to the corners of such an office as that of Wellington.

"And now tell me, Stan dear," begged Helen. "Where have you been and how did you lose me?" She smiled prettily at this question, then continued. "After that you may tell me how you have found me."

The young man smiled in return. He was of light complexion, and had curls to add to his distinguished appearance—but wait until Jane or Judith would see those curls! Noting his wonderful broad forehead, even Miss Bennet guessed he must be a very talented young man, indeed.

"I will tell you all about it, little sister," he began in a subdued voice. "After I left you at the young ladies' seminary at Blindwood I re-

turned to New York, and there, I found, I was being watched by those Russians!"

"Oh, those men! I, too, saw them, and had much trouble to get away!" interrupted Helen.

"Then I knew I should not again risk going to your school, or even sending a letter. I waited for weeks, hoping to find some way to send you word, when I was suddenly called West to fulfill a contract in a big city. That took me far away, and with sorrow I left you, sending no word. It was like the old world then, here in this America. The traitor was everywhere and I could not risk your happiness once more. So I went to the West."

"But you were very wise, Stan," Helen insisted, "for all the time at that school, I had money, and all things I wanted. You arranged things so beautifully."

"I am happy, Siostra," he replied, using the Polish term for sister. "I would that little Helka had never to know sorrow, she has suffered too much."

"But now—no more," and Helen grasped his hand in sheer gratitude.

"It was while in Chicago," continued the young man, "I met a social worker, she was called, and

this young lady told me what to do to get a message to you. She wrote a letter to the New York worker, Miss Mahon, and that was how I found you had come here from Blindwood."

"Oh—I see!" exclaimed Helen, as if the information had answered a long standing question.

"But now tell me how it is with you, Siostra? You are very happy here?"

Memories of the tearful face of Marian Seaton delayed for a moment her reply. Then she smiled brightly and told him, it was a very wonderful school, and she had many very good friends, but her benefactor!

"You shall know the most wonderful girl of all," enthused Helen. "My real sister and protector, Miss Allen. You have yet, my friend, something great to know, for you will learn what a girl can do for kindness alone."

"Oh, little one. I know what anyone can do for so good a sister as Helka Podonsky, but I shall like also to know this wonderful friend. I hope she may not take all the glory from Stanislaus?" This a playful quib proclaimed the youth of the boy, and one capable of enjoying persiflage.

"That could not be," replied Helen. "But I must tell you about the man who followed me in

New York. He came one day to my apartment where I was with Miss Allen and her friend. He waited until he knew I was alone, then he came to my door. I was so much terrified I could only shut that door, then I fainted."

"Poor little girl," replied the young man, "I knew they would follow you, but how did you elude them?"

"That very day we left New York, and came safely to this far-away place. Oh! Stanislaus, you cannot know what Miss Allen has done for me. Always when she asked to find my friends, and I say—wait—she will wait. If then she make known where I am, I would again be found by those robbers," and the violet eyes blazed at the thought.

"But I do know something of your good friend," he replied. "The social worker of New York wrote in her letters of this young lady. She said many fine things about her."

"She could not say half," briefly replied Helen.

The sound of a motor outside interrupted them. Miss Bennet opened the door to admit the wayfarers from New York City.

CHAPTER XXX

THE ACORN AND THE OAK

"OH, it's Jane! Come on!" called Judith, dragging in her wake such of the girls as she could collect from the study hall. "Come on and hear all the news."

At that moment the party from New York, Mrs. Weatherbee, Jane and their distinguished guest, Mme. Nalasky, were being shown in to the halls of old Wellington. There, just across the polished floor within the confines of the cozy office, Helen and her guest awaited, expectantly, and with evidence of suppressed excitement.

"Here we come!" announced Jane, who led the way. "Helen—you here? We stopped at your house," then seeing the strange young man, Jane repressed her joyous enthusiasm.

Madam Nalasky was holding back a little, at the urgent request of her secretary, Marie, who

openly rebelled that Madam should so endanger her voice with all this excitement. Mrs. Weatherbee was saying a private word with Miss Bennet, and that left Jane with Helen and the stranger. Jane had volunteered to go on ahead to prepare Helen for the news. She stood now, debating how to undertake her task.

"Helen, you can never guess who is here?" she finally blurted out in true school girl fashion. "Have you ever heard of the fairies?"

"Of a fairy godmother—yes," replied Helen with surprising promptness. "I want to introduce to you, Miss Allen, my childhood friend—Stanislaus," she said simply.

The young man bowed, and Jane smiled, as she accepted the introduction. But her eye was over her shoulder on the door where Mme. Nalasky was being held back.

"Oh, Helen, I am all excited," admitted Jane. "We have such wonderful news. We have found —guess whom?"

"Oh, not my Matka! Do not tell me my dreams are all come true. It cannot be my mother!" and Helen, too overcome to say more grasped Jane and clung to her, trembling visibly.

"There is a lady here who cannot wait another moment to see you, may I——"

But the tide could no longer be stemmed and in rushed Mme. Nalasky.

"My baby! My own darling!" exclaimed the singer, brushing into the room and embracing the astonished Helen.

Jane drew back, and stood near Stanislaus, who was viewing the scene with quite as much astonishment as it were possible for a young man to experience. At the moment Jane could not refrain from indulging her old-time delight of clapping her hands. As if that were a signal, Judith and her followers actually entered the room in battle formation. Mrs. Weatherbee was about to expostulate, when Madam Nalasky turned smiling to the group.

"Ah, this is all too beautiful! Like a grand opera climax. I would not have the young ladies leave, if you please, madam," to Mrs. Weatherbee. "May they not all hear our wonderful story? I think of a certainty, the companions of Miss Allen must indeed be worthy of so much pleasure."

Judith almost chuckled. Jane dragged her in nearer and squeezed her hand. Drusilla, Dicky, Weasie, Gloria, besides all the others waiting impatiently in the big hall could hear their invitation to take part in the climax of the grand opera.

Helen was dumfounded. She stood staring at the woman beside her, as if she could not trust her senses. Then Marie, the faithful protector of talent, stepped up and deliberately led her mistress to a chair. Madam did sit down. She knew Marie's power, but from the small throne she might still direct that girls' opera.

She motioned Helen to come nearer, and then begun in true stage fashion to unfold the tale.

"This little girl," she said, "is my own sweet daughter. When I left her in Petrograd at a conservatory she was in the care of the very wonderful man, my uncle. I had been—somewhat with the nobility, was obliged to leave the beautiful Poland, and too soon my kind old uncle—he who had taken Helka to watch over, was gone also!"

Stanislaus stood there like a guard, Jane thought, and as Madam described the scene it was truly one of dramatic value.

"When my uncle was gone, my baby was lost to me entirely. I had no way of finding her as these Russian artists who wanted her for her talent had put her in another conservatory. She showed talent so early in her baby life when her dear father would play his beloved violin," she paused at this memory, then proceeded. "I

searched the whole country and at last found she had come to America."

She stopped while Stanislaus was exchanging significant looks, but he did not venture to interrupt the narrative. Jane was having all she could do to keep the girls in check, for Judith tugged at her sleeve. Weasie had pulled off her coat, while Gloria was making such eyes, across the room, poor Jane felt almost helpless, under the silent demands of her constituents. She wigwagged, and blinked, but had no reason to believe they would restrain themselves if this recital did not soom come home to Jane.

"When I found she came to America I followed," went on Madam. "But not one word was I able to get of the child until to-day, this wonderful young girl came to me to ask me to sing at this concert—" indicating the surrounding as Wellington. "How, can you say, she was not sent to me directly, when all these years I have sought in vain, and every clue I would come to I soon would lose in some mysterious way—perhaps always arranged by those enemies?"

"May I speak, Madam—Matka?" Helen corrected herself. "You do not know how I reached America. It was through this young man, who like me was left at that awful conservatory. He

got the passports and I came to America with him and his good old aunt."

Everyone now turned to the embarrassed Stanislaus.

"But that was very little, Madam," he said with his gallant sweeping bow. "I only got the passports and we came here to study more safely. I had hoped to reach my good old friend, Madam Strutsky, but she had gone, my aunt had found the school for young ladies, and there Helka went. From there I also lost her."

"Helen! Helen!" exclaimed Jane. "How could we guess we had such a lost and found girl among us?"

"Ah, but my friend," and Helen stepped forward, still keeping up the stage effect, "I have been through much trouble, and have found many friends, but it was Jane Allen who saved me when all the others were so far away. Even my good, kind Stanislaus had left me for the time, when she came, and everyone here knows how she has quietly worked to keep me from despair in the dark hours."

"Please! please!" interrupted Judith. "If I do not speak, Mrs. Weatherbee, something dreadful will happen. You see, I was with Jane from the beginning of this episode, and I feel I should

be permitted to say something for the girls. You would not close a scene like this without a chorus?"

"Judy!" begged Jane, thinking of that dreadful glee stuff about the girl, and her name was Jane, "Please don't start any cheering."

"Oh, *no,*" but her voice said "Oh, *yes.*" Then, "You just wait until the girls get their breath. I am emoting like a six cylinder."

Jane glanced over the heads of those surrounding her, and in the hall caught sight of Marian Seaton's face. It was strained and saddened, and the look returned to Jane's pleaded silently for the unhappy outcast.

"Oh, Marian," called Jane instantly. "Do come in and let us tell you that the story in the *Bugle* helped wonderfully to untangle—the tangle. After all, it did no damage, but good."

"But the good came through you," said Marian, entering the room. "Jane, I am sorry, and have told Helen so."

"Now, come on, girls, and all join the circle," exclaimed Jane, smiling as she took Marian's hand. "We will have a wonderful time after dinner."

THE END